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MP for Taranaki-King Country

Deputy Speaker of the House



Welcome to 2026! It is going to be an extremely big year for the contest of ideas. Parliament will be busy as ever leading up to the general election towards the later part of the year.

There are wide and varied challenges within my Taranaki King Country electorate which people approach me about in terms of either policy ideas or individual queries we need to solve. Often it is a request to navigate their issues with a government department.

The area of the Waikato which I represent starts in Mokau and finishes at the boundary of Ngaruawahia. The width covers Raglan, Kawhia and across to Taumarunui. For that reason, I call Waikato a diamond. I know that we have for many years focused on the golden triangle which has been incredibly important for connecting Auckland, Hamilton, and Tauranga. An excellent job has been done on roads such as the Waikato Expressway.

The reminder that I keep giving is there is a west side to the Waikato which includes beautiful areas as the fore mentioned Raglan and Kawhia but also the Waitomo caves and wonderful parts of the King Country that people enjoy so much when they visit. With plans underway for the Southern Links to exit the lower end of Hamilton into Waipa and King Country and in time the completion of the Mt Messenger bypass we will see a major advance in our piece of the diamond.

There will be better roads linking us to the wider Waikato and Taranaki. There are strong linkages between these parts of the country. Long term locals will be aware of Ferdinand and Mooloo as we have strongly contested rugby between the two provinces. We now have the Chiefs who cover both areas and include the King Country. Our extraordinarily strong dairy farming in these provinces provides outstanding economic value to New Zealand, supported by the sheep and beef farming for which the King Country is known.

Despite the tariffs imposed on countries around the world, including ours, we are continuing to have a primary production sector which is strong. The recent situation outlook has estimated the value at sixty-two billion dollars. This gives rural areas a current advantage, one which we must continue to strive for, however there are still many issues to be worked on in rural New Zealand including healthcare that meets the needs of our populations no matter how far away from the centre they choose to love.

I continue to be impressed with our local health services which are run by extremely dedicated people in our community and provide accessibility locally so that patients only need to travel when there is an urgent need for a hospital or a specialist (and sometimes with the right support from health professionals, specialists can now be accessed through telehealth).

In my view, the big legislative change for 2026 will be the reform of the Resource Management Act. This act has seen numerous changes over 30 years to the point where it has become too onerous and unworkable in helping us achieve productivity in New Zealand. We used to be highly productive. Red tape now controls all aspects of our lives, and it is time to cut and untangle it. I hope those of you who hold an interest in the detail of these changes will be making submissions to the Environment Select Committee in the interests of ensuring we end up with an enduring piece of legislation.

While we continue to preserve our beautiful biodiversity, we must also ensure that our productivity, our infrastructure, and our housing continue to progress at a much faster rate than over recent years. I am looking forward to the progression of this bill through the House.

I wish you a healthy and successful year!