



THE OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

28 November 2025

Doc No. 21913951

Hon Chris Penk
Minister for Land Information

Email: C.Penk@ministers.govt.nz

Kia ora Minister,

Thank you again for your time earlier this month. I look forward to working more closely with you in the future.

I'm writing today seeking your help as Land Information Minister to respond to an urgent environmental issue which is set to have a significant economic impact on Rotorua as a top tourism destination.

Two weeks ago Rotorua experienced extreme weather and strong winds, resulting in significant amounts of aquatic weed being ripped from the lakebed and washing up along our recently redeveloped \$40m Lakefront which was co-funded by Government through PGF/Kanoa (see picture attached). The weed is decomposing and removes oxygen from water which has caused fish to die - my family counted over 100 floating dead fish that they could see washed up in the lake weed.

It's also creating a severe pungent odour across the city causing serious impact on businesses and locals' quality of life. Bad reviews are already being received from tourists, and national media attention regarding the aquatic weed disaster are causing deep concern for Rotorua's reputation as a world-class visitor destination, especially for up-coming summer holidays.

Rotorua Lakes Council and the Bay of Plenty Regional Council are working urgently together to clear the weed, 530 tonnes of weed has been removed and 300 tonne is estimated to still need removal. However, even with extensive efforts this reactive response won't clear the weed until another week at least. It is also costly for our ratepayers and not a sustainable long-term solution.

A lasting solution to lake weed control sits with LINZ, and this is clearly identified as a Crown obligation under the Te Arawa Settlement Act 2006. I regretfully share that there is great disappointment from leaders and our community who've learnt that LINZ funding for this important work has been decreasing year on year despite increase in need.

The comparison of funding we receive compared to other lakes is quite shocking:

- We understand that Lake Wānaka alone receives approximately \$1 million annually from LINZ.
- However, over the past 5 years LINZ has invested only \$2.5m into 6 lakes in Rotorua (Lakes Rotorua, Tarawera, Ōkātina, Rotoiti, Rotomā, Rerewhakaaitu).
- LINZ funding primarily supports maintenance of swimming and boat access to lakes, and it is known that current investment is not enough to reduce the overall weed biomass which continues to expand.
- This year, we have received \$350,000 from LINZ for Lakes in our district, despite there being 300 hectares of weed beds in Lake Rotorua alone.

In Rotorua we have developed local solutions through a business case and are confident that, with appropriate and reasonable level of investment, aquatic weed issues can be effectively managed using proven, well-understood methods and tools that are already available.

On behalf of our Rotorua community, we would appreciate you urgently looking into this matter please to ensure the Government is providing appropriate support to Rotorua for effective lake weed management.

We also invite you, or a Senior representative from LINZ, to please join us for an urgent meeting via video call to discuss this matter. I will also be inviting Chairpersons and CE's of our partners BOP Regional Council, Te Arawa Lakes Trust and Ministry for Environment.

We will confirm directly with your office the next available time and look forward to discussing this significant issue as soon as possible.

Ngā mihi nui,



Tania Tapsell
Her Worship the Mayor of Rotorua



Matemoana McDonald
Chair, Bay of Plenty Regional Council