Rural Communities Policy

The Green Party will support rural communities[1] to build on their strengths and identities and develop local solutions to achieve their goals. We will ensure access to public services and other resources that enable the wellbeing and resilience of rural communities and rural ecosystems.

Vision

Resilient rural communities embrace nature, connection, and shared futures.

Values and Principles

- *Honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi:* The leadership of rural hapū and hapori must be respected and the mana of rural whānau Māori upheld.

- *Ecological Wisdom:* Rural communities are key to building mutually beneficial relationships between rural activities and local ecosystems.

- *Social Responsibility*: Rural communities thrive when social networks are strong and there is fair access to the opportunities and resources needed for wellbeing.

- *Appropriate Decision-Making*: Governance must be inclusive, collaborative, and supportive of local initiatives while also being adaptive to the unique challenges and opportunities of rural areas. Generations of local knowledge and practices must be respected.

- *Non-Violence*: Rural communities need support to overcome challenges, withstand pressures to act unsustainably, and maintain their vitality in the face of various economic, environmental, and social pressures.

Strategic Priorities

The Green Party's strategic goals include:

> *"A more connected, compassionate, and equal Aotearoa"*

Actions in this policy that will help achieve this include:

- Enabling rural communities to actively participate in governance decision-making, including catchment, regional, and district management plans. (2.1.1)

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[1] *Rural communities*: people living in small provincial towns and the areas of low population density that are serviced by them.

- Adopting community-led approaches to community development, resilience, and revitalisation. (2.2.1)

- Providing social housing, education, health, disability, financial, waste, and postal services that are accessible and equitable. (3.2.1)

- Adopting innovative service delivery models like remote services, mobile services, and community hubs. (3.2.3)

- Enabling Māori-led approaches to community development and climate adaptation. (4.1.2)

- Enabling community banking, local currencies, local markets, and other means of exchanging local goods and services. (4.3.3)

Policy Positions

1. Rural Ecosystems

Issues

Rural communities are the guardians of much of our natural environment. Rural landholders have a responsibility to restore biodiversity, soil and water health, and minimise agriculture's climate pollution.

Actions

1.1. Protect prime agricultural land and native ecosystems, including by:

    1.1.1. Preventing their loss to urban sprawl and non-essential public acquisition;

    1.1.2. Enabling sustainable and regenerative land use; and

    1.1.3. Ensuring all forestry plantings support ecological and community wellbeing.

1.2. Support rural communities to conserve and restore local ecosystems, including by:

    1.2.1. Uplifting the role of tangata whenua as kaitiaki of the rohe;

    1.2.2. Resourcing and incentivising rural landowners to regenerate and maintain local indigenous biodiversity; and

    1.2.3. Enabling community-led conservation efforts.

See also our [Biodiversity and Environmental Regeneration Policy](), [Land Use and Soils Policy](), [Freshwater Policy](), [Marine Policy](), and [Forestry Policy]().

2. Rural Identity

Issues

Government sometimes fails to prioritise rural community needs. Rural areas are diverse, face complex challenges, and possess unique strengths.

Actions

2.1.   Empower rural communities to identify their own needs and develop local solutions, including by:

    2.1.1.   Enabling rural communities to actively participate in governance decision-making, including catchment, regional, and district management plans; and

    2.1.2.   Enhancing rural-specific data collection and analysis to inform decision-making.

2.2.   Uplift the unique, evolving identities of rural communities, including by:

    2.2.1.   Adopting community-led approaches to community development, resilience, and revitalisation;

    2.2.2.   Resourcing development for, and access to, marae, pā, and wāhi tapu;

    2.2.3.   Facilitating local cultural and heritage conversations; and

    2.2.4.   Resourcing the protection and restoration of significant heritage and cultural landscapes.

See also our [Governance Policy](#), [Research, Science and Technology Policy](#), and [Arts, Culture and Heritage Policy](#).

3.   Access to Services

Issues

Rural communities often struggle to access essential services and facilities. Basic services like infrastructure, banking, and public transport are limited or unavailable. Medical and education services struggle with staffing and appropriate funding and postal services have been reduced. Specialised services such as hospitals, counseling, social work, and family support are difficult to access. This means that rural communities struggle to get the support that they are entitled to and need, widening inequality.

Actions

3.1.   Provide rural communities with essential infrastructure, including for water supply and treatment, electricity, roading, and communication, including by:

    3.1.1.   Centrally supporting local government bodies to address infrastructure deficits.

3.2.   Ensure that rural communities are provided with basic services, including by:

    3.2.1.   Providing social housing, education, health, disability, financial, waste, and postal services that are accessible and equitable;

    3.2.2.   Resourcing "by Māori, for Māori" basic services, such as papakāinga; and

    3.2.3.   Adopting innovative service delivery models like remote services, mobile services, and community hubs.

3.3.   Enhance rural-urban linkages and rural communities' access to specialist services, including by:

3.3.1. Providing internet connectivity, postal, and transportation services to rural areas; and

3.3.2. Developing provincial towns as centres for rural areas that deliver specialist services.

See also our [Government in the Economy Policy](#), [Energy Policy](#), [Housing and Sustainable Communities Policy](#), [Education Policy](#), [Health Policy](#), [Waste and Hazardous Substances Policy](#), [Digital Policy](#), [Transport Policy](#), and [Justice Policy](#).

4. Community Resilience

Issues

Rural communities are economically vulnerable, with challenges such as limited or seasonal employment opportunities and dependence on key vulnerable industries. Rural communities are particularly vulnerable to severe weather events that are becoming more frequent and extreme due to climate change. Some of the most impoverished communities in Aotearoa are rural ones, including in Northland, East Cape, and the West Coast. Many rural communities have strong social networks, but geographic isolation may lead to social isolation that increases the vulnerability of some rural residents and workers.

Actions

4.1. Uphold the leadership and resilience of mana whenua, including by:

4.1.1. Elevating the voices and place-based knowledge of mana whenua in local decision-making;

4.1.2. Enabling Māori-led approaches to community development and climate adaptation; and

4.1.3. Resourcing rural marae as autonomous hubs for emergency response and other services.

4.2. Maximise strong rural social networks and community bonds, including by:

4.2.1. Providing community hubs and other shared spaces in rural centres; and

4.2.2. Resourcing unpaid work by community members that contributes to community cohesion and wellbeing.

4.3. Build resilient rural economies, including by:

4.3.1. Supporting circular local economies, including local food economies;

4.3.2. Diversifying rural economic activity into non-primary sectors like manufacturing and renewable energy;

4.3.3. Enabling community banking, local currencies, local markets, and other means of exchanging local goods and services; and

4.3.4. Mitigating the adverse impacts of large-scale businesses and other external pressures, including tourism, on local communities and small businesses.

4.4. Support leadership development and capacity building in rural communities, including by:

4.4.1. Retaining and upskilling young people in rural communities;

4.4.2. Supporting rural communities to access tertiary education, apprenticeships, and professional development; and

4.4.3. Supporting rural entrepreneurship, innovation, and collaborative business approaches.

4.5. Resource a just transition to regenerative practices in primary industries, including agriculture, forestry, aquaculture, fishing, and mining.

4.6. Minimise the impacts of extreme weather events and climate-related risks on rural communities, including by:

4.6.1. Conducting place-based research and upholding mātauranga Māori to inform resilience, adaptation, and preparedness strategies;

4.6.2. Prioritising the functioning of vital networks and support services in an emergency; and

4.6.3. Resourcing rural emergency services, including fire and ambulance.

See also our Community and the Economy Policy, Climate Change Policy, Emergency Management Policy, Business Policy, Livelihoods Policy, Workforce Policy, Immigration Policy, Food Policy, and Recreation and Sport Policy.