



[News](#)

[Reports](#)

[Events](#)

[Dine Shop Stay](#)

[Notices](#)

[Trades Services](#)

[Home](#) > [News](#) > [Defending one's self from attack](#)

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Defending one's self from attack



News Editor

Dave Stewart

Elections are designed to bring out the best in us and we've certainly seen a lot of that in Whakatāne with some amazing civic-minded people putting their hand up and standing for what is important to them.

For my part, it is keeping our publicly owned assets in public hands and fighting the faintly hidden agenda of "user pays" where we will simply be paying twice for the services we are getting as ratepayers now.

I have also amplified the policies of all the current coalition government parties on rates reforms that will remove the \$9 million in GST on Whakatāne pays on rates, sharing the GST collected in the district and having Crown entities pay rates for the services they use that ratepayers provide.

Changing government priorities from their donors to their voters and getting them to support their own policies isn't that extreme, and I would have thought that people aligned to the current government parties would have all rallied around these policies.

But no.

Instead, I'm getting attacked from these very people.

Mayor Victor Luca campaigned at the 2022 election that he would lobby central Government for better funding of council infrastructure and then explains he left it up to Local Government New Zealand to do the lobbying.

Brendan Horan, who campaigned and won a list seat for New Zealand First on their policies proclaims "anyone promising rates reform as an election tactic was selling a fantasy".

I find myself in the bizarre position of being slammed by people for promoting the very policies they support.

When I started this campaign, I made a promise to myself to be the best candidate I could possibly be, and focus on real issues that would make a real difference to Whakatāne and not attack anyone else.

But I will defend myself from attack.