**Doug Leeder, Bay of Plenty Regional Council Chair**

**Speech for the release of the independent report: Rangitāiki River Scheme Review**

**Opening Speech:**

Sir Michael Cullen, thank-you for delivering an independent comprehensive report that considers a broad range of highly technical and complex information.

It was vitally important for us to identify what considerations are required for the future   
of the Rangitāiki River Scheme, given this particular scheme costs the ratepayers of our region circa $28 multi-million dollars, to sustain the lives we choose to lead in a geographical area that was originally a vast wetland.

As this is a technical report, we accept this may not provide the answers sought by all, in particular people who were and still are, living with the consequences of the significant weather event  
we experienced 6 months ago.   
People who are still not in their homes, people whose land has not recovered to the productivity it once was.

As Sir Michael said to us earlier today ‘sometimes certainty cannot be given even when it is most wanted’.

I will now hand over to Sir Michael to take you through what the panel have identified.

**Doug Leeder, Bay of Plenty Regional Council Chair**

**Speech for the release of the independent report: Rangitāiki River Scheme Review**

**Closing Speech:**

This report contains learnings and clarification that we will now action, and raises questions that we must now all engage in.

Not just with those living with the Rangitāiki, but with those living elsewhere in our region,   
with our colleagues in other councils locally and across the country,   
and the policy makers in central government who guide our work.

Climate change will continue to throw these types of challenges at us   
and we must collectively accept that we will never successfully control   
the indeterminable power of Mother nature.

There are 29 recommendations contained in this report   
and there are now three big questions that we must ask:

1. How do we balance personal safety with personal choice?
2. How is this funded?
3. To what extent should the historical alterations of the natural environment be maintained?

Let’s consider Matahina Dam as an example of this.

The largest single modification of the Rangitāiki’s natural flow and behaviour   
was built for neither drainage nor flood control purposes.   
50 years ago, way back in 1967, the Matahina Dam was built for the sole purpose of hydroelectricity generation.

On numerous occasions the dam has been strengthened, including after the Edgecumbe earthquake   
and it has been used to hold water in high river levels and floods.

But when it was built it was not designed for this, and lowering of the reservoir behind the dam,   
so that it can be used to store water to prevent flooding downstream,   
must be weighed up with the effects this may have on the structural integrity of a dam   
built for an entirely different purpose and therefore the safety of those living downstream from it.

And then there’s the issues the report has identified with Reid’s Floodway. The Panel have concluded that the work we are currently undertaking into the feasibility of spill components, an additional outlet as well as a lower crest for the spillway should continue to be pursued using any and all legislation we may require to do this – including the public works act.

These are all conversations that we will continue to have with our communities, and as the report has identified, we must continue to have these conversations no matter how challenging they may be.

Other findings by the panel will need to be shared with colleagues in other organisations, both private and public.

The report outlines these in greater detail along with the other technical investigations   
undertaken by the panel – some of which you have just heard from Sir Michael.

What Sir Michael hasn’t taken you through today, are the associated changes in over a century of play between the continued interventions and ongoing natural challenges that the report also considers, therefore I urge you to read the report in its entirety – it can be found on our website [www.boprc.govt.nz](http://www.boprc.govt.nz)

We did not shy away from getting an independent review to help guide   
how we manage the multi-million dollar assets owned by people living in the Bay of Plenty,   
and we will not shy away from the conversations that must be held with those   
who set the legislation around how best to manage climate change,   
what is an acceptable cost both financially and to the environment, and how to balance personal safety with personal choice.

The release of this report is not an end, but one component in a continuum of discussions already begun around both climate change and the converging world views that come with co-governance.

Thank-you.