



## Waikato Scenarios – A Summary

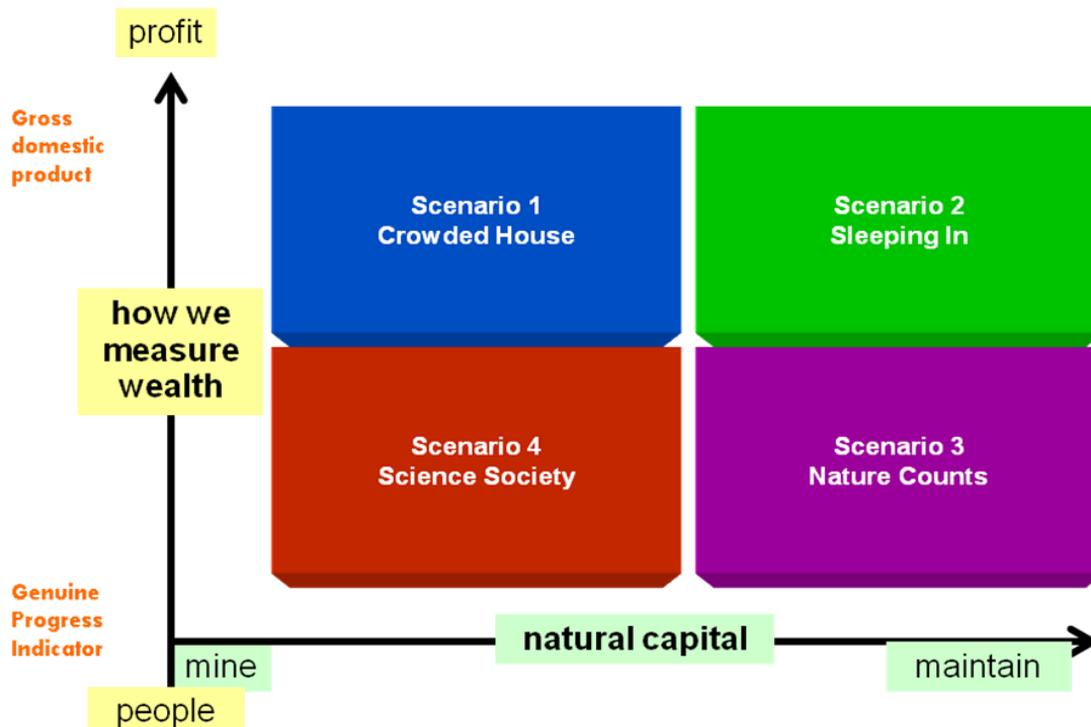
Today significant differences are developing in the views and behaviour of people over energy costs, food prices, housing affordability, retirement income and climate change. These intensify the stresses that population growth and economic development are placing on the community, infrastructure, business and the environment.

We cannot tell what the future will bring. But, we are able to imagine how differently we might live, work and play in the Waikato. To help, the 'Creating Futures' project lead by The Waikato Regional Council has developed four scenarios that describe alternative ways the future may occur. We were helped by many people in the community, in business and in government when writing these stories.

The Waikato scenarios explore some of the deepest dilemmas of our times: profit versus people; growth versus the environment; global versus local; and rich versus poor. How these dilemmas are resolved might affect our ability to improve economic, social, cultural and environmental well-being and to achieve our [Community Outcomes](#).

The scenarios will also help us better recognise and begin to grapple with change and think about how we might respond to it.

## Waikato Scenarios



## 1 – Crowded House

The first scenario, **Crowded House**, shows how the effects of an ageing population might be reversed. New Zealand accepts a lot of refugees fleeing major economic and climate crises and their knock-on effects. The world is firmly in a global era of unstable prices for power, water, petrol and food, with long-term risks of occasional explosive unrests. Many people are on the move and the Waikato finds it challenging to absorb the number of people that come to the region, but it is less difficult here than it is in the Auckland Region.

## 2 – Sleeping In

In **Sleeping In**, the second scenario, there is a lot of inertia even though some people are doing the “right thing.” We pay little attention to how we use our natural resources until the end of cheap oil begins to hit home. Similarly, greenhouse gas emissions are not seriously addressed until there are major climate shocks. Once these shocks strike, we are able to overcome the stalemates that prevented early action, and manage our natural resources carefully.

## 3 – Nature Counts

In the third scenario, **Nature Counts**, conditions worsen and we can no longer be sure about the stability and predictability of *Mother Nature*. The idea of “one planet, three decades”<sup>1</sup> takes hold early. Growing local and regional actions begin to address the challenges of economic development, energy security and water quality. Although there are transition hiccups, the sustained focus helps drive development of a more sustainable economy.

## 4 – Science Society

**Science and Society**, the fourth story about the future, describes a world where advances in the sciences and technology have fostered deeper development of a knowledge based economy. While we become wealthier, there are some dangers associated with the sciences underpinning economic developments. The combination of fears and hopes surrounding the new economy lead to the imposition of many more regulations. We measure and monitor everything in society; some argue that it is just too much.

We do not believe that any of the stories as they are written will be the actual future. We think, in fact, the actual future might include some elements of all of the stories told here. But, we know it might be very different because our imaginations are limited. There are future possibilities that we cannot even imagine today.

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<sup>1</sup> Living with the natural limits of our planet within three decades. Today we are not, as the total Earth population uses about 1.3 planets to support our lifestyle.

## How were the scenarios developed?

The Waikato scenarios have been developed in four quadrants represented by how natural capital is managed and wealth is measured. We were helped by many people when writing these stories.

The scenarios were developed by engaging government agencies, business, regional and local stakeholders and the wider community by:

1. Reviewing other Scenarios around world and in NZ
2. Researching the key factors shaping the world, New Zealand and the Waikato region
3. Gaining insights from project partners and the community
4. Surveying regional strategic thinkers
5. Workshops with government agencies, business, NGOs and the community to identify **key drivers** and to **draft scenarios**
6. Testing and validation draft scenarios
7. Reviewing and update draft scenarios

## What do the scenarios tell us?

The scenarios tell us that many of the phenomena affecting the Waikato no longer change in simple, predictable ways. Maybe they never did, but the world in the past seemed less complex, less interconnected, and more forgiving of mistakes and miscalculations. Global *economic* interconnectedness makes it harder for governments, business and others to predict and intervene in social and economic problems. For example, petrol prices are set by supply and demand in a global marketplace, there is little that governments in NZ can do about this.

The Waikato scenarios show virtually all of us will have to deal with things that could rapidly go wrong, ranging from water restrictions, to power cuts. traffic congestion, population influx and disease outbreaks. While costs and prices and new potentially disruptive technologies will drive some changes, social and political choices will be critical. How we act and the decisions we make individually and together will affect how wisely we use our land and natural resources, and how well we prepare ourselves for changing times.

We might be faced with more social change as illustrated in the scenarios. Who lives in the Waikato, for example, will have major consequences and implications for our well-being. It will affect our monetary wealth (economic growth, savings, investment, consumption, labour markets, pensions, taxation and intergenerational transfers); social systems (family composition, living arrangements, housing demand, migration trends, and epidemiology and health-care services) and political systems (voting patterns and political representation).

## How will the Waikato Regional Council use the scenarios?

The scenarios suggest we should place a much higher premium on our ability to provide early warning and support that with early and focused action. For instance, any successful program of action on climate change must stabilise atmospheric greenhouse gases (GHGs) and *at the same time* adapt to likely changes and maintain economic growth. If we don't become smarter when we produce food and energy, stabilising greenhouse-gas emissions might require a major drop in lifestyle and hinder economic development in the Waikato.

Preparing for rapid and surprising change of any kind requires that we look back at what has happened and forward to what could happen. We need to build our capacity to resist undesirable change, adapt to cope with change, or transform where necessary to take advantage of a different set of circumstances.

Developing, discussing and debating these scenarios will enhance our collective understanding of the issues that shape the future of the Waikato. The scenarios provide a useful contribution to formulating council strategies (Long Term Council Community Plan, LTCCP), regional policies (Regional Policy Statement, RPS) and sub-regional strategic initiatives such as *Blueprint Coromandel* or *Future Proofing Hamilton*.

The scenarios also provide qualitative input into the 'Waikato Model', a computer-based spatial decision support system (SDSS)<sup>2</sup> that allows the community, businesses, councils and others to explore alternative future options and policies and their effects across the Waikato. Outputs of the model include maps and quantitative data and indicators to evaluate the different futures.

The scenarios help us better recognise emerging issues and challenges and to think about how we might respond to these. The scenarios were used by the Waikato Regional Council:

- To enhance collective understanding of issues shaping the region
- As a learning tool to build capability for futures thinking
- To inform decision-making
- To provide input into regional planning, policy and strategies
- To help guide development of the WISE model, an integrated spatial regional computer model, see [www.youtube.com/watch?v=RgEABCz1Rrl](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RgEABCz1Rrl).

## What can I do?

We hope the scenarios will help you ask questions about our future. Thinking ahead helps us prepare for changes when they do happen. If you read the scenario stories, we know that you might have very different ideas and a better imagination about what the future will be like. So, we hope that even if you do not agree with them that you think about three questions:

1. Do you agree that the Waikato will not be the same in 10 or 20 years as it is today?
2. What might change?
3. Will these changes make a difference to you?

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<sup>2</sup> The "Waikato Model" includes economic, population, climate, land use and a number of other data that enable to explore "What/If" questions, e.g. what happens if dairy production (milk solids) increases by 4% every year. The model, currently under development and scheduled for completion in 2010, will allow looking at least 50 years ahead. For more detail refer to [www.creatingfutures.org.nz](http://www.creatingfutures.org.nz).

## **More Information**

For more details about the Waikato Scenarios, including a full technical report and stories told by people living in the four alternative futures in 2050 (“*a day in the life of...*”), see [www.creatingfutures.org.nz](http://www.creatingfutures.org.nz) .

Comments on these scenarios may be submitted to:

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