



2 April 2009

Hon. Rodney Hide, MP
Minister of Local Government
Parliament Buildings
WELLINGTON

Dear Minister

A Recipe for Unity

Yesterday, 1 April 2009, six of the region's councils met together representing the diverse communities of the region. The meeting involved Mayors and Councillors from the following:

- Franklin District Council
- Manukau City Council
- North Shore City Council
- Papakura District Council
- Rodney District Council
- Waitakere City Council

We have been asked to collate the views of the meeting and forward them to you for consideration as part of your review of the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Auckland Governance.

Individual Councils have also sent their respective views to you separately.

Minister, there are recommendations within the Royal Commission report which are to be commended. We agree that Auckland needs a strong new regional body. However, we believe the current proposals do not provide truly representative democracy.

There are different impacts on the different local councils in the region, particularly Rodney and Franklin, but we do share many common concerns about the Royal Commission recommendations.

Given the extremely tight time-line in which local councils have been given to respond, we concentrated on the high-level issues that we believe need to be further addressed by the Minister and Government.

1. Representation

All ordinary members of the new Auckland Council should be elected from wards, and should not be elected at large.

People need to have confidence in the system of representation in order to have confidence in the process of reform.

These proposals place too much power in the hands of too few who are not readily accountable to the diverse communities of the Auckland region.

2. Cost of Reform

The cost of reform will be significantly beyond the capacity of ratepayers to pay, has not been budgeted for in draft long-term plans, and the funding gaps should be met by the government.

3. Assets

The accumulated assets of the Auckland community are believed to exceed \$28 billion. Assets should be used for the long-term benefit of the Auckland region and the portfolio of assets should be clearly identified. .

The supply of quality, affordable water is essential for the region. The governance of water is critically important. We recommend that this can be achieved by retaining the current pricing tension between the bulk suppliers and the water retailers, even within the CCO structure, and by retaining water in public ownership, and we recommend retaining strong policy oversight from the Auckland Council.

Two CCO's are sought, one for retail and one for bulk water supply. We hold a strong view that stormwater management use lies with land use at a local level.

We support a Regional Transport Authority and we recognise that transport remains a critical issue. We wish to work with government to reach an early resolution to this issue.

We are willing to start work immediately on such matters as:

- a spatial plan for Auckland
- a single District Plan, recognising diversity and special Districts
- the creation of one rating basis, recognising that significant transition work will need to be done to ensure fairness and equity across the region.
- support for a regional economic development agency
- continuing to work together to implement and extend shared services.

The Commission report separates rural and urban Auckland and we are committed to working together to find a consensus on these issues.

4. Social

Council wants to work with the government on social development issues before government finalises its view.

5. Rural Issues

Rodney and Franklin have specific rural issues about planning, transport and water management that are not addressed by the Commission report and we support their need to have these resolved as there are many complexities that need further consideration. Therefore we request that any final decisions that affect these two Councils be excluded from the purview of the Commission in the meantime.

Finally, on behalf of the six Councils mentioned above, we respectfully ask that Government give consideration to engaging with a Steering Group comprising representative Mayors, Deputy Mayors, and / or Councillors to ensure that any transition is as smooth as possible.

PENNY HULSE
DEPUTY MAYOR
WAITAKERE CITY COUNCIL

JULIA PARFITT
DEPUTY MAYOR
NORTH SHORE CITY COUNCIL