

## NZCID Member Brief on Auckland Governance Reform

9 April 2009

Dear Members and Associates,

No doubt you will be aware of the Government's decision on Auckland Governance.

The decision is fully consistent with the fundamental principles that NZCID advanced in its One Auckland submission, that is - a single unitary council for Auckland, supported by a number of council controlled organisations including integrated transport and water agencies and 23 community councils charged with the responsibility for overseeing the provision of local amenities and services. This almost brings to fruition one of our key initiatives of the last calendar year, to achieve fundamental reform of Auckland Governance and is a very positive outcome.

Having researched the Royal Commission recommendation in detail NZCID clearly expressed its views through to Government that the six local councils proposed by the Royal Commission would not be effective - they were too large to be local and their continued responsibility for service provision, particularly including local roads, would have resulted in ongoing issues over demarcation of responsibility between the Auckland Council and the six local councils.

Pleasingly the Government has determined that this was not a workable solution and has resolved instead to have between 20 to 30 local boards to be the "eyes, ears, and voice" of the local community.

NZCID does not have a firm view as to the final number of local boards; however we do stand by the logic of our initial submission which broadly aligned the local board boundaries with the electorate boundaries. This provides a consistency of size, alignment of representation at regional and central government levels and is generally consistent with communities of interest across the region.

The Government is committed to putting the new governance arrangement into place by October 2010. We agree that the transition needs to occur with urgency and have underlined to Government the need for the transition board to ensure projects continue as planned during the transition phase.

If there are two areas where we think the Government's decision can be improved, it is that Local Boards should receive funding from the Auckland Council (say \$2-\$3m per annum), which the board can allocate within their respective communities. This might be used for enhancing sports facilities, arts

facilities, encouraging cultural interests, parks, swimming pools etc. This funding would be tagged to improving amenities or services that support the local community and enhance community involvement and identity. We think this empowers the local boards to provide genuine support to the communities they serve and in turn keep them focused on meeting communities needs effectively. Without that allocation of funding there is a very real risk that the local boards will merely act as an organized lobby group continually going cap in hand to the Auckland Council whilst having no direct responsibility or accountability back to their local communities.

The second issue that we think will be problematic is that under the proposed structure the transport agency carries no responsibility for state highways and railways within the Auckland region. NZCID had proposed a truly integrated transport agency run by an independent board appointed jointly by the Crown and by the Auckland Council. The Crown would maintain a controlling interest in view of the fact that it is the principal funder of the transport network across the region. In this way all of the components of the transport network and the development of it could be undertaken in an integrated manner with appropriate trade offs being made between investment in road, rail and other transport modes. In balance, we think that this would be a better outcome than having the responsibility for transport for Auckland split between NZTA, KiwiRail and the Auckland Council transport agency.

Overall, NZCID is extremely happy that this milestone in reform of Auckland Governance has been achieved. We have taken a significant lead role in this outcome. We very much appreciate the support that has been provided by members in enabling this to occur.

NZCID will be making a submission to the select committee standing behind its original One Auckland submission and outlining the recommendations described above. Prior to doing this however we would appreciate input from members on these or any other issues that you would like NZCID to include in our submission.