

# One Auckland, One Plan, One Voice

The "One Auckland" proposal advanced by the New Zealand Council for Infrastructure Development will achieve transformational reform of Auckland's local government, says NZCID Chief Executive, Stephen Selwood.

"This is a once in a life time opportunity to get it right for Auckland. Its time to put division and disunity behind us and lift the region's performance from mediocrity to excellence.

"We need unifying leadership to develop our communities, revitalise our arts, sports and culture and lift our economic and environmental performance. We need well resourced highly focussed infrastructure agencies to fix our transport system and to provide essential water services and community amenities.

"The right solution for Auckland is one that will maximise the contribution of individuals, recognise the importance of local knowledge, experience and influence, and capitalise on economies of scale and efficiency at the most appropriate level, either locally or regionally.

"One Auckland" is designed to achieve this outcome.

"The new structure provides for a single unitary authority to lead the Auckland region, replacing the existing eight territorial authorities.

(download the organisation chart [here](#) )

## The One Auckland Structure

"The Council will be led by the Mayor elected at large from the greater Auckland area who will be responsible for championing the aspirations of the people of the region.

"As leadership skills are the crucial success factor for this role, the ability to win popular support by standing for election at large is seen as a critical test of capability for the role. The Mayor will have both a deliberative and casting vote on Council and will have a range of executive powers including appointment of the Boards and Chief Executives of the key delivery agencies.

"Community engagement, participation and influence will be strengthened by the establishment of 23 Community Councils based on the parliamentary electorate boundaries. These will include two Maori Councils to represent the interests of Tangata Whenua across the region. The Community Councils will comprise five members elected locally.

"Each Council will be allocated an equivalent amount of the regional rates to allow implementation of community plans. An equal allocation of funds ensures equity amongst all communities and is targeted at ensuring wealthier communities are not advantaged over lower socio demographic areas. If Auckland is to thrive we must capture the talents of all our people. The community developments plans will make this happen.

"In addition to the local council, each community will elect one person at large to provide direct representation on the One Auckland Council. The Council will therefore comprise 24 members including the Mayor. While elected from community areas, the role of One Auckland councillors is to oversee the strategic direction of the region as whole, and be the link between national, regional and local government.

"Broad alignment of Community Council areas with parliamentary boundaries is designed give each community consistent representation at central government level through their local Member of Parliament, at the regional level through their "One Auckland" council member and at the local level through their Community Council. It will also enable adjustment of boundaries to reflect regional growth over time.

"Alongside the Community Council structure, the One Auckland Council will be supported by three divisions encompassing: economic development; community culture and recreation; and sustainable development; and by two council controlled organisations: an integrated water services company and a fully integrated transport agency. The Mayor will lead the executive management board which will oversee the operations of each arm of the Council.

"Services will be contracted to the private sector, as they are now, but the Community Councils will be the eyes, ears and voice of the local community to ensure service standards are maintained and improved.

## **The Case for Reform**

"The case for fundamental reform is compelling", says Selwood.

"A review of strategic and operational planning across each of the existing councils in the region shows a litany of best laid plans sitting on shelves.

"Experience shows that even with the best will in the world, governance and funding structures are not enabling delivery of the agreed vision.

"While progress is being made, those that are achieving results must work around structures which inhibit rather than enable the outcomes that have been collectively agreed as priorities for the region.

"The region's governance is characterised by competing leadership and disunity. Organisational relationships are extremely complex. There is duplication of function and dilution of expertise across council structures. Decision making powers are fragmented and lack transparency. Accountabilities are blurred. Most of the wealth of the region is held by the city councils while the regional council is insufficiently funded. Decisions are often "mislocated" – either taken at the national or local sphere of government when the impacts are regional. Conversely, existing Community Boards lack the tools to be truly representative of the communities they serve.

### **Continued division is the last thing Auckland needs**

"We looked closely at amalgamations of existing councils and strengthening the current structures but rejected the concept of a three tier structure as we have now. Retention of the existing councils, whether it is three, four or seven cities, inevitably means continuation of competing city leadership and direction. The success of any structure which includes the existing cities is totally dependent on those councils ceding control to the region. Past experience shows this will not be sustainable over time. The stronger the middle tier of governance, the bigger will be the tussle for power between the region and the cities.

"This is the heritage we come from. It is not the model to lead the Auckland region forward into the 21st century.

"The significant risk of an enlarged middle tier comprising three or four city councils is that it will exacerbate the very problems that exist today - competing cities undermining regional unity and common direction.

"Arguments over funding and strategic decision making are the very issues that have given rise to the need for governance reform. It is impossible to see how this would be any better under a three or four city model. Arguably there is potential for even more division that is currently the case.

"The time for compromise is over. If we are to achieve our aspirations for Auckland to be the best that it can be, persisting with the status quo or tinkering around the edges will not take us there. We know that from past experience. The governance of our city region needs transformation, not transition."

#### **For more information contact**

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The NZCID submission on Auckland Governance reform is available at <http://www.nzcid.org.nz/>

## **Question & Answer**

### **Why are we considering reform?**

Answer: Auckland is facing infrastructure challenges with billion dollar price tags. In addition to those challenges, the region's local government is extremely complex. Eight councils operate alongside each other. The full range of council services and activities are unnecessarily duplicated in each organisation, costing a total of \$2 billion each year to operate. There is a recognition that Auckland operates as a single city-region environmentally, socially and economically and that its growth pressures are being felt regionally and need to be managed regionally. Councils themselves have talked for some time about improving the way local, regional and central government operates in the region. But there is much frustration that if Auckland could solve its problems itself it should have done so by now. Auckland is a vital national economic hub, its ability to do well is essential to the success of the region and the country. The social, environmental and economic costs of not having a united Auckland represent hundreds of millions of dollars annually in lost opportunities. Given that fact and the region's current challenges, NZCID agrees that governance reform is necessary.

### **What is the One Auckland proposal all about? What will change?**

Answer: Developing a single united leadership structure for the Auckland region will give all Aucklanders democracy, clear strategy, effective administration and world class services. Communities will be able to have more direct say and funding. Under the proposed One Auckland plan, rather than 8 local authorities duplicating services and operating independently with sometimes competing interests, a single organisation will provide direction, services and leadership across the region. One Auckland would take full responsibility for all services currently provided across the 8 local authorities. Within the organisation five service agencies would plan and provide transport, water services, economic development, regional parks and facilities, and regulatory and environmental services. Central and local government could then easily work together on mutual strategy, providing certainty by committing funding well into the future. Community Councils, based on current electorate boundaries, would ensure community involvement and influence at the local level, a level where people feel they can influence decisions that impact on their everyday lives. Through their community council, communities will be able to have their views and needs heard.

### **Why can't we just leave things as they are and get councils to work better together? What's wrong with the way things are now?**

Answer: There have already been a number of initiatives created to try to get Auckland's eight local authorities to work together and address Auckland's issues. The Regional Growth Forum and many plans and strategies focusing on sustainable management, transport and economic development are some examples. Because the responsibilities for funding and delivery of regional infrastructure and facilities is split between a lot of independent parties there has been no real success in implementing these plans. The region is also facing a massive deficit on a number of its key infrastructure, roading and public transport just for example. By uniting Auckland's leadership and addressing the issues effectively as a region, the One Auckland proposal will provide Aucklanders with:

- A unified vision, voice and leadership
- Efficient and consistent service delivery across the region
- Integrated decision making
- Better local democracy for serve local communities
- Better value for money for Aucklanders

### **What do we want to achieve?**

Answer: The way that our local government leads us is central to our quality of life. The supply of water, energy, transportation and communications underpin the quality of our health, education, agriculture, trade and commerce, personal safety and security, culture and entertainment. For Aucklanders, having a good standard of living and being able to make progress relies on several things. Our ability to:

- Improve our productivity
- Trade successfully in international markets
- Attract international investment

Yet in Auckland local government is extremely complex, and we are facing a number of unprecedented challenges which are frustrated even more by the governance situation. Councils themselves have looked into the need to strengthen regional governance. They identified these issues:

- Plans aren't integrated with each other, there are competing interests and there is no big picture for Auckland's priorities
- Fragmented powers and responsibilities mean strategies are not delivered on
- Regional decisions are sometimes wrongly made nationally or locally
- Joint decision making forums are heavily relied on but have little influence
- Regional funding is not enough
- Duplicating activities is wasteful and leads to inconsistent standards
- No single organisation has full responsibility for the region's infrastructure
- There is no united opinion from the people and no united Auckland voice with central government

To address the issues, One Auckland aims to give Aucklanders:

- A unified vision, voice and leadership

- Efficient and consistent service delivery across the region
- Integrated decision making
- Better local democracy for serve local communities
- Better value for money

### **Will some councils be amalgamated?**

Yes. Under the proposed One Auckland plan, rather than 8 local authorities duplicating services and operating independently with sometimes competing interests, a single organisation will provide direction, services and leadership across the region. One Auckland would take full responsibility for all services currently provided across the 8 local authorities. Within the organisation five service agencies would plan and provide transport, water services, economic development, regional parks and facilities, and regulatory and environmental services. Councils themselves have already identified a number of problems affecting the region's leadership. Addressing these specific issues and providing a unified vision, voice and leadership; efficient and consistent service delivery across the region; integrated decision making; better local democracy for serve local communities; and better value for money is the purpose of the One Auckland proposal.

### **Will councils still do the same things they do now?**

Answer: Under the proposed One Auckland plan, rather than 8 local authorities duplicating services and operating independently with sometimes competing interests, a single organisation will provide direction, services and leadership across the region. One Auckland would take full responsibility for all services currently provided across the 8 local authorities. Within the organisation five service agencies would plan and provide transport, water services, economic development, regional parks and facilities, and regulatory and environmental services. Central and local government could then easily work together on mutual strategy, providing certainty by committing funding well into the future. Community Councils, based on current electorate boundaries, would ensure community involvement and influence at the local level, a level where people feel they can influence decisions that impact on their everyday lives. Through their community council, communities would be able to have their views and needs heard. Basing community council areas on electorate boundaries would also make it easier for groups to work with their local MPs on community interests.

### **Will my community board still be there?**

Under One Auckland, community councils will play an important role in keeping the local in local government and providing a voice for local interests. Based on the current electoral boundaries, each community council would be made up of 5 members elected by their local community. It would be the aim of community councils to plan and promote the social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of communities. Community councils would represent and advocate

local interests at the regional level, they would consider and report on any issues or responsibilities given to them by the regional One Auckland organisation. Community councils would be an important mouth piece for local communities and special interest groups to provide feedback to One Auckland on their specific issues and the services they receive. It would be the responsibility of One Auckland to provide basic services. Community Councils will each be allocated an equivalent amount of the regional rates which will be the primary funding base for implementation of the Community Council plans. An equal allocation of funds ensures equity amongst all Community Councils and is targeted at ensuring wealthier communities are not at an advantage over lower socio demographic areas.

**Will my rates go down?**

At the current \$2 billion per year cost of running local authorities in Auckland, it would be reasonable to expect economies of scale and improved efficiencies. Uniting Auckland's leadership under one organisation should deliver at least a 10% saving on that cost each year. That means a \$200 million saving every year. We are currently many billions in the red on infrastructure we need. \$200 million a year could make a significant contribution to making projects possible by alternative funding. If Aucklanders choose to direct their new found revenue to rates cuts, every rate payer could have the benefit of choosing what to do with \$400 more in their pockets every year. Aucklanders could also choose to direct their new found revenue to community activities and facilities, either way the choice is there to be made.

**What will change? Will there be more or fewer councillors?**

Answer:

<b>Current Situtaion</b>	<b>One Auckland</b>
8 independent local authorities governing Auckland	One Auckland, a single integrated authority uniting Auckland governance
7 mayors and 1 chairman	1 Mayor, elected by Aucklanders
8 chief executives	1 Chief Executive heading regional operations
30 community boards	23 Community Councils aligned to parliamentary electorates
264 elected representatives	139 elected representatives
5,500 council staff	Unified staff structure empowered to do an effective and efficient job

8 city, region and district plans	1 integrated region-wide plan
8 separate processes to charge rates	1 rating system for the region
8 sets of bylaws	1 set of region-wide bylaws
12 water network operators	1 water agency,
15 transport agencies	1 integrated transport agency
7 building control authorities	1 building control authority with community branches
14 finance, IT and HR systems	3-6 finance, IT and HR systems

**How much will it cost to restructure? Won't a re-organisation just mean job losses for staff?**

Once it is decided on, any re-organisation will need to be carefully thought through. Before that has taken place it is difficult to estimate the final cost of a re-organisation. Providing better value for money, and more effective and consistent facilities and services is the main aim of the proposal though. We have already heard from many council staff that say they are often frustrated by the current complex arrangements and would welcome the opportunity to do their job better and more easily. It is also important realise that the total cost of running all of Auckland's eight councils is currently \$2 billion every year. Uniting Auckland's leadership under one organisation should deliver at least a 10% saving on that cost each year. That means a \$200 million saving every year and empowered staff rather than frustrated staff.