

Media release
24 July 2007

TRANSFORMATION OF AUCKLAND GOVERNANCE REQUIRED

The New Zealand Council for Infrastructure Development has written to the Prime Minister and Minister for Local Government, Hon Mark Burton, requesting cabinet to set up an independent commission of inquiry next year to look at transformational reform of Auckland's local government. The Commission would conduct an in depth public review of how Auckland's local bodies could be best restructured to meet the needs of the fast-growing region and to introduce the necessary changes before the 2010 local body elections.

The initiative has been supported by individuals representing a broad cross section of Aucklanders who have endorsed the letter to the Prime Minister or written separately. It also has the backing of Employers and Manufacturers Association (Northern) who are running their own advertising campaign for reform of local government, the Committee for Auckland, and the One Auckland Trust.

Over the last six weeks, as part of an ongoing consultation process, I have met with over fifty organisations all working in their own way to lift standards of living across the region. These organisations have included business, sports, the arts, Maori, environmental, cultural and educational institutes," says NZCID Chief Executive, Stephen Selwood.

"Everywhere I go I find widespread agreement that the complex local body structure in Auckland, with eight councils, eight plans and 264 elected politicians, is holding Auckland back.

"Community based and business organisations are frustrated by indecision, competing leadership, complex bureaucratic structures, red tape, lack of direction, inconsistent and insufficient funding.

"The government has espoused its vision to transform Auckland into a leading twenty-first century metropolitan region, which is able to compete on the international stage.

"This requires significant investment in our infrastructure like high speed broadband, effective transport networks, high quality water services and resilient energy supply. It also requires advancing our arts sport and cultural identity, and building strong social cohesion across a diverse multicultural society.

"Tinkering around the edges of the existing governance structures as is currently proposed by the existing 8 City District and Regional Councils will not achieve this vision. Selwood says.

"Rather than settle for a regional compromise that each of the existing Councils can live with, and which will inevitably hold back transformational governance reform, we have asked that the Government support the establishment of an independent Commission of Inquiry to objectively assess proposals and determine the best governance structure to lead Auckland's future development.

"The Inquiry would evaluate current proposals to strengthen the existing structure against more fundamental reform proposals including a "One Auckland" structure.

" The commission would comprise distinguished New Zealanders with the capability to independently review, analyse, report and recommend an optimal solution for reform of Auckland governance. This process would occur during 2008 and report back in early 2009 with a view to elections under any newly reformed governance structure in the 2010 local body elections.

"We need a new and simpler local governance structure that operates more efficiently and can make timely decisions which take into account the interests of all Aucklanders."

This requires transformational reform of Auckland's local governance, Selwood says.