



Committee for Auckland

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Submission from the Committee for Auckland to Local Government Commission “Auckland Governance Arrangements: Proposals for Wards, Local Boards and Boundaries for Auckland 20 November 2009”

By email to info@lgc.govt.nz

Preamble

The Committee for Auckland congratulates the Local Government Commission on the difficult task of preparing workable proposals for the governance arrangements of the Auckland Council.

The scheme proposed is a commonsense and workable system which finely balances the requirements for

- a successful Auckland Council operating at the metropolitan level for all Aucklanders
- the careful treatment of whole communities of interest
- the number and boundaries of the local boards that can be well resourced and attract capable local leaders.

While there may need to be adjustments of finer detail, the Committee supports the overall thrust of the Commission’s proposals, despite some under-representation which seems difficult to resolve under the constraint of a 20 member Council.

Local Boards – 19 in number

The Committee is particularly supportive of the Commission’s recommendation for 19 local boards. We appreciate the criteria the Commission established to assist the new Auckland Council to meet its *regional* decision-making responsibilities, while local boards focus on that which is appropriately local – in other words, the right balance to support the effective governance of Auckland as a metropolitan city. Some adjustments in detail are likely to be necessary but overall a good balance has been achieved at a macro– level.

The balance of duties and functions between the local boards and the Council needs to be understood better and should evolve through good practice in preference to regulation. However the opportunity for the Mayor to interact with 19 local Board Chairs rather than a greater number gives a better likelihood of a united and team based approach to both delivering the vision for Auckland, and meeting local needs. At these numbers, it is a manageable relationship.

The Committee also agrees that the new Council will need capable leadership at all levels and that 19 local boards is a good solution for meeting the Commission's criteria for 'effective governance', including the opportunity for local areas to generate resources including local leadership capacity.

Communities of Interest

At a broad brush level the Committee agrees that communities of interest have been gathered together in a workable way, respecting both common characteristics and a variety of catchment and infrastructure boundaries – i.e. with coastal communities grouped, inner city suburbs grouped, and so on. We note that the Commission has taken a broad approach to defining communities of interest by overlaying a range of factors including shared vision and history; these overlays make sense.

The City Centre

The Local Government Commission and the Committee both acknowledge the special nature of the city centre, its activities and institutions; the Commission notes the importance of the city centre as the commercial heart of the region. It is a highly specialised economic zone for Auckland, already highly productive, and increasingly important as the Auckland economy transforms to a more outward facing and knowledge-based economy. It houses businesses and large institutions such as the Museum and NZ's largest hospital, is home to students and residents, and it hosts visitors and events that draw people from near and far. It plays a special role for Auckland and for New Zealand as a whole.

Presently, this area is under-represented at the Auckland Council level with just one Councillor. While the Committee agrees that two Member wards provide diversity and choice for electors, it is difficult to see where the Commission could take an extra Councillor from, in order to provide a two person ward for this important area.

We are aware that others are considering balancing a single member ward for the city centre by an additional subdivision to allow for more effective representation of CBD voters, an unusual group of high density apartment dwelling people with a clear community of interest different from any other locality. This is one option. Another is to make a small increase in the number of local board Members to reflect the specific issues of the city centre through the representative structures. These are well worth considering.

A further solution to the under-representation issue would be to review the Maungawhau Hauraki representation issue at an early date, particularly in response to the fast growth rates predicted for the inner city suburbs and the CBD, particularly as apartment dwelling becomes more popular. The Maungawhau/Hauraki ward area is predicted to grow at a faster rate than many of today's fast growth areas in the green fields areas in the north and the south and warrants review.

However the more complex issue concerns the combination of the special role of the CBD with the inmates and institutions within the city centre who are ratepayers or key stakeholders without electoral representation. To illustrate the rating contribution of

businesses, one high quality corporate tower alone provides \$2.27 million in annual rates revenue. In addition, CBD ratepayers have voluntarily agreed an additional targeted rate to achieve a higher quality of amenity in the business district. This means that it is very important to complement the electoral arrangements with broader governance tools such as the CBD Advisory Board.

The Advisory Board was established by Auckland City and is backed by the Committee for Auckland and others, to help drive the CBD Strategy and to provide a voice for those affected private stakeholder groups who pay the separate targeted rate (commercial and residential property owners and ratepayers) and representatives of other CBD stakeholders such as the Universities (major landowners and investors) in allocating the targeted rate according to CBD priorities.

While the scope of Auckland Council Advisory Boards may be beyond the brief of the Local Government Commission to determine, it is nevertheless an important consideration for balancing the effectiveness of a single ward Maungawhau-Hauraki Ward Councillor and 15 local board members drawn from the Maungawhau, Waiheke and Great Barrier local boards. Effective representation for city centre interests relies in part on additional structures such as the CBD Advisory Board. This brings together the wider strategic interests alongside the interests of residents (residents are also represented on the CBD Advisory Board.)

The Committee recommends consideration of options to give a fuller voice to the distinctive needs of the CBD, reflecting Auckland's need for the CBD to be both a great place to live and work and also for Aucklanders and New Zealanders to visit. These might be a 2 member ward, a CBD division of the Maungawhau local board, or additional local board members.

The Committee recommends that the Commission highlights the importance of an advisory board mechanism for *effective* representation in its final report and perhaps also with the Auckland Transition Agency in the ATA's design for the Auckland Council. It is important for an area that plays such a strong role in the Auckland and the NZ economy, and is such an attractive place for people to live and work.

The Committee also recommends that if the current proposal for 5 local board members for the inner city/ Maungawhau local board remains at 5, then in the interests of effective representation of the inner city, this number should be kept under close review in response to the city centre's high growth.

The Committee welcomes an opportunity to appear formally before the Commission to elaborate on any of these points.



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