

THE DEPARTMENT OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS

Te Tari Taiwhenua

Local Government Briefing

Hon Rodney Hide
Minister of Local Government

Copy to: Hon John Carter
 Associate Minister of Local Government

Title: Aide Memoire: Auckland Governance Report 2009

Date: 27 March 2009

Key issues

This aide memoire provides information for you to speak to an oral item at Cabinet on Monday 30 March 2009, on the Auckland Governance Report.

Action sought

Note and use to update Cabinet colleagues on Monday 30 March 2009

Timeframe

30 March 2009

Contact for telephone discussion (if required)

Name	Position	Telephone		Suggested first contact
		direct line	after hours	
Anne Carter	Deputy Secretary	04 495 9323	021 229 6261	✓
Marilyn Little	Director Policy	04 494 0589	021 228 8118	

Return to: Caroline Bridgland
 DMS file reference: PLG-1779-4
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Anne Carter
 Deputy Secretary
 Local Government and Community Policy Group

Aide Memoire for Cabinet 30 March 2009: Report on Auckland Governance

You are presenting an oral item on the Royal Commission's Report at Cabinet on 30 March 2009. The attached pages of bullet points are to assist you to brief your Ministerial colleagues. It draws largely on Brendan Boyle's presentation discussed with the Ad Hoc Ministerial Group on Thursday 26 March 2009, but has been updated to reflect your press release comments so messages remain consistent.

In advance of your meeting with Cabinet, Senate Communications will provide to you an up-to-date precise of the public and media response to the Report on Auckland Governance should you wish to share this with Cabinet Ministers.

Noted


Hon Rodney Hide
Minister of Local Government

Proactively Released by the Minister of Local Government

CONFIDENTIAL

INITIAL TAKE ON AUCKLAND GOVERNANCE REPORT

- 3,500 submission made to the Royal Commission on Auckland Governance
- the Auckland Governance Report (the Report) makes over 100 recommendations
- the Report was publicly released Friday 27 March 2009 – two days after it was received by Government.

Main recommendations proposed:

- a single unitary authority called the Auckland Council. Consists of an elected Mayor and 23 councillors (mix of elected and appointed): 10 councillors elected at large, 8 councillors elected in four urban wards (2 per ward), 2 councillors elected in two rural wards, 2 councillors elected at large by voters for the Māori electoral roll, 1 councillor appointed by mana whenua.
- Mayor has some executive powers and proposes Long Term Council Community Plan with budget. The Auckland Council would comprise a single organisation, with a Chief Executive, single staffing and management structure.
- six new local representative bodies or elected Local Councils. Has fewer powers than a Territorial Local Authority. They will be subsidiary and accountable to the Auckland Council - their key function will be to oversee delegated delivery services and to enhance local community engagement.
- a permanent Minister and Cabinet Committee for Auckland to set Government spending priorities for Auckland and oversee events of international significance.
- an independent Establishment Board to assist with the transition. Existing Councils retain existing abilities but will be constrained. Many workstream to review existing programmes and functions.

Winning recommendations:

- Delivers one elected Mayor, one Council for Auckland to drive, manage and be responsible for all planning and delivery of services, and one voice for Auckland.
- Other winners are proposals for management of assets including water and wastewater, coordination of public transport, and a master plan for the waterfront.
- 23 Councillors – is bigger than I expected to see. Officials are assessing this and will make alternative recommendations.

Potential Losers:

- The Report doesn't provide well for adequate local representation. The second tier governance structure is weak – a rollover of six of the seven existing local authorities and staff is not likely to give effect to stronger community connectedness. Officials are looking at alternative governance structures that will strengthen the "local" into the second tier.
- In addition the current governance arrangement within the proposed 2 tier system is unlikely to address existing tensions and competition between current authorities. It is unlikely to facilitate effective and timely strategic planning (e.g. agreed approaches to growth management), and consistent resource management planning (e.g. local processing and decisions on resource consents undermining regional outcomes).

- A permanent Minister and Cabinet for Auckland are not desirable. A temporary mechanism is my preference. We don't wish to create further complexities or duplication.
- The recommended transition approach isn't effective as it does not deliver a largely rationalised unitary council by 2010.
- Existing legislation can account for Māori representation if there is a desire for it.

GOVERNMENT'S INTENTION FOR AUCKLAND

- Government wants Auckland to be the most exciting, vibrant metropolitan centre in Australasia: a region that attracts people and investment; a region that has first class infrastructure and lifestyle; and a region that will encourage our children and grandchildren to build their futures in New Zealand.

COMMUNICATIONS

- A benchmark research study of 1500 Aucklanders undertaken before the Royal Commission Report was released showed:
 - ❖ 68% support one Council for the Auckland region and local community Boards to represent local areas.
 - ❖ Biggest potential concern is the loss of local representation – 31% of respondents.
 - ❖ Faster decisions on transport and having standard planning rules are seen as the most important advantages (a mean of 7.89 out of 10).
 - ❖ Only 4% believe current councils work well together.
- The research study will be used to inform communications for the release of the Government's decision.
- The announcement of the Government's decision would be made in Auckland (subject to Cabinet approval) on / or around Wednesday 8 April. Invitations would be issued on Monday following Cabinet (if high level decisions are approved) to key stakeholders for confidential briefings. These briefings would take place immediately prior to a media conference.

TIMEFRAME

- Officials will assess the Report's recommendations against the agreed criteria, including alternative options on second tier governance structures and transition. High-level advice will be provided for Cabinet on 6 April 2009.
- Announce on Monday 6 April that the high-level government response to the Report will be announced publicly in Auckland on, or around Wednesday 8 April 2009.