

Chief Executive Officer  
Local Government Commission  
P.O. Box 5362  
Wellington 6145

22<sup>nd</sup> June 2016

Dear Sir

**Re: Application for Local Government Reorganisation proposed by the  
Northern Action Group and a Review of Governance on Auckland  
Council**

The Local Government Commission (LGC) has been directed to obtain submissions on the proposal by Northern Action Group (N.A.G.) to create a separate Unitary Authority in the North Rodney area.

This public consultation has been the result of the High Court Decision CIV2014-485-0098 NZHC805 which directed the LGC to consult the whole Auckland Council area over the proposal. As part of that decision the wider public needed to be consulted over the proposal.

The Local Government Commission (LGC) has requested that submissions be made on the proposal or any other alternative proposal for governance of the Auckland Council.

The Association wishes to make a submission on the application and propose a viable alternative to the N.A.G. proposal.

## **Background**

Rodney District was a Local Government area in the Northern most part of the of Auckland Region from 1989 – 2010. The area was an amalgam of Helensville Borough Council & Rodney County Council in 1989.

The Rodney District Council (RDC) was based in the geographic centre of the area, being Orewa. That location was central to Warkworth, Wellsford in the North, Hibiscus Coast in the East and to the South West, Kumeu & Huapai.

The Auckland Council came into effect on the 1<sup>st</sup> November 2010 having been through the largest re-organisation of Local Government in New Zealand history. The amalgamation was the result of the Royal Commission Inquiry on Auckland Governance.

The result was the combining together of 4 City Councils', (1) Borough Council and (2) Rural District Councils' plus the Auckland Regional Council. The eight units became established by the Local Government Commission as the 'Auckland Council' (AC).

The outcome was different from the Royal Commissions recommendations. The Rodney area, excluded the urbanised area on Hibiscus Coast & Whangaparaoa, the balance being formed into the Rodney Ward. The Rodney area went from 1 Mayor & 12 Councillors, to 1 Councillor and a Local Board of 9 members.

## **Consultations**

The Association was aware of the original application by N.A.G. to be excluded from the Auckland area back in 2009. The proposal amalgamation with Kaipara District Council was seen as an attempt to keep out of Auckland and remain a rural based District. That concept was rejected by the Government at that time.

The new application completed in November 2013 was not discussed with the South Western area representatives.

Also the Rodney Local Board has not advised the community that a different proposal was mooted by N.A.G.

Our first knowledge of the proposal was the public notice on the 24<sup>th</sup> June 2016 in the Herald. Since that time and after advising adjacent ratepayer groups and obtaining information from the L.G.C. we have met to decide on our response.

We register our disappointment at N.A.G. and the Rodney Local Board for not advising the public and community of the proposal.

Rodney District lost Hibiscus Coast & Whangaparoa but was left with the rural area of the Rodney District. That remaining area is from Te Hana in the North to Brighams Creek in the South/West.

The area contains quite different rural townships & settlements being Wellsford, Warkworth, Snells Beach, Kawau Island, Kaukapakapa, Helensville, Waimauku, Kumeu, Huapai, Muriwai & Riverhead. There is no major central township area from which the area can be administered to serve the 'Rodney Ward'.

There is no natural geographical or administration centre for the current Rodney District Board. They still meet in Orewa in the old Rodney District Council buildings, but that is out of the Rodney Boards area.

Geographically having the urban area taken out of the District we are now left with two substantial different rural areas, one in the North and the other in the South/West.

The Northern area is in general based around Warkworth whilst the South/West area is based around Kumeu.

There is very little connectivity between the two areas as the North's connection is via S.H/Way 1 & Orewa and the Bays to Central Auckland.

The South/West area is connected to Central Auckland via the S.H/Way16 with the townships connected by the arterial State Highway 16.

The close proximity to Westgate and downtown Auckland gives the South/West a semi rural area. We are not urbanised yet but still retain the rural township feel with most land holdings being lifestyle blocks.



### **The N.A.G. Proposal**

There are elements of the N.A.G. proposal that we have some sympathy with and have agreement on, but there are problems of governance if the N.A.G. proposal is approved in its current form.

N.A.G. proponents object to North Rodney being included in the super-city due to the distinctly rural nature of North Rodney, claiming it is inappropriate for such a community to be ruled by an urban-based and focused administration. Their polls indicate a very clearly expressed desire by a majority of submitters not to be included in the 'super-city'.

The N.A.G. proposal submits that only the North Rodney portion of the Auckland region meets the criteria laid down in the act (that enables communities to organise their own local governance). Kumeu-Huapai are in South/West Rodney, but obviously will be affected by the decision regarding the N.A.G. proposal if it is approved, as it will leave our area as semi rural with a fast growing population and a uncertain future administration.

### **KHRRRA make the following observations**

1. We agree that North Rodney is rural with rural township & coastal settlements.
2. We also agree with the N.A.G. that the Northern area of Rodney is 'more separate' from Auckland than our South/West Rodney, largely because commuting to Auckland Central is feasible from southern Rodney while the greater geographical separation makes it less feasible from North Rodney and less desirable in terms of the cost of roading or trains necessary to facilitate commuting). Therefore North Rodney will likely remain more rural in the future with the resultant differences between North & South/West Rodney becoming more pronounced.
3. The South/West Rodney concerns are that our proximity to Auckland threatens unplanned urbanisation and our focus is on encouraging planned growth with matching financed infrastructure. North Rodney wishes to be protected from 'planned growth' by the city limit boundary.
4. South/West Rodney see ourselves as a collection of small rural towns, with areas of commonality and connectivity between them. North Rodney, see themselves a rural with rural townships such as Warkworth serving the hinterlands.

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5. The Unitary Authority means that N.A.G. has to administer Regional & Local issues under one authority. Given that Auckland Council has substantial reserves and public space with the N.A.G. proposal, the funding of money to the new Unitary Authority we believe will be very difficult. In the past, the old Rodney District Council didn't receive any benefits for the Regional Parks & Reserves from the Regional Council.
6. The problem of size and economies of scale in the past have shown that in this area Local government has failed. The Kaipara District had Commissioners appointed to manage their affairs and Rodney District Council even with the Orewa & Whangaporoa areas included had Commissioners appointed. The small Local Authority we believe, with minimum overheads and costs will not succeed in the future.
7. We don't see the scale and size of the N.A.G. proposal as succeeding in practical financial terms or being politically acceptable.

Despite these differences we feel the South/West Rodney has much in common with North Rodney. Our area is largely rural but lifestyle blocks rather than productive farm units. Forced urbanisation will push our population to 30,000 extra people, probably within 15 years.

We believe that South/West Rodney is not a good fit with the Massey Henderson Ward, as that area is extensively suburban in character and is being build out with even higher densities in residential development which we don't wish to see in our rural townships.

We believe based on the above that the N.A.G. application should not be approved.

### **Alternative Proposal**

We would like to put an alternative proposal to the Commission for consideration. The proposal we believe is achievable by the Local government commission is as follows:-

1. The area of the existing Rodney Board be split into two separate Board areas. The division would generally on the Waiwera –Makerau lines as proposed by N.A.G.

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2. That the areas for the identification of this proposal be known as North Rodney & South/West Rodney. When approved the North Rodney be renamed Rodney Board and the South Western area be renamed not using the name Rodney.
3. That the two areas still be administered by the Auckland Council.
4. The two Boards have a reduced membership to 6 or 7 to reflect the reduced area of administration with the Chairperson elected from the elected members.
5. That each Board be based on the centres of Warkworth & Kumeu respectively.
6. The internal division to be made on areas of commonality for the election of members.
7. That there be, an Auckland Councillor for each board elected area. This would increase the Auckland Councillors by one. This would avoid the necessity of one Councillor trying to represent 46% of the Auckland Council land mass as at present.
8. Both areas are subject to residential growth with little infrastructure in place. A second Councillor would help ensure the in balance between rural areas and urbanised areas is taken into account with the compilation of the new Council.  
Population criteria (considered as a criteria in the Local Government Act 2009 now repealed) created a serious in balance between the urban representatives and rural based Councillors.

## **Observations**

The current Auckland Council structure of having one Councillor for the Rodney Board area simply has not worked. That's not a reflection on the current Councillor. It is too much to ask one individual to cover 46% of Auckland's territory and represent that area effectively. With the diverse areas and substantial different communities has made development progress for Rodney very difficult.

The Local Board has had to deal with the North/South division with limited delegated power and responsibilities. The lack of Board involvement with the Community has not helped the concern that South/West Rodney doesn't have a voice.



The Local Government Commission have, already recognised that smaller Boards with clearly defined areas of interest have and small populations have been established.

Great Barrier & Waiheke Islands' have small population based Boards. They seem to work successfully.

A similar model should be used for the Rodney area to ensure representation is effective for both areas of interest despite the size of population.

The lack of ability to connect to the Auckland Council has become of great concern. Its lack of being able to have the existing Local Board properly funded and able to engage with the community also means there is a disconnection with the community.

The Local Government Commission must as part of the review of the N.A.G. application look at the wider considerations.

The Commissions must as a first principle ensure that the areas of administration must be based on communities that are linked together physically and that the administration works and is relevant to them.

There is no doubt, that the Auckland Council has problems being too large, bureaucratic and isolated from communities. The Local Boards are underfunded and have little powers confirmed on them. The Rodney Board has the added problem of having to represent a large geographical area with a small number of elected representatives.

## **Conclusion**

We believe that the Auckland Council external area should not change in its size. All that should occur is to the administration of area can be revisited and altered to ensue that communities of interest are respected.

We believe the above proposal will achieve that. We are prepared to attend a meeting or hearings if required.

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