

Report 99.421

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28 July 1999

Report to Wellington Regional Council

From: Stuart Macaskill, Chairman

Chairman's Report

1. *Local Government New Zealand Conference*

As councillors are aware, Crs Shields, Laidlaw and I attended the *Local Government New Zealand* Conference in Auckland.

The theme of the Conference focussed on local democracy. Views expressed by many speakers were very much in keeping with the views coming through in our Operation Wareham discussions. The quality of the addresses was very high.

Speech notes from the Conference have been circulated to councillors in the Information Bulletin. Both the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition spoke.

I have little doubt that under a re-elected National Government we would see a continuation of trends to reduce government, both at the national and particularly at the local levels. Issues, which have been put to one side, would incidentally resurface, with local government seen as an agency of central government and very tightly constrained.

The Rt Hon Helen Clark speech makes it clear that a Labour Government would move to allow local communities far more freedom to determine their own future by way of a power of "general competence".

Both leaders made it clear that there would be no "forced amalgamations" but local bodies were strongly encouraged to work together. The funding powers review which Ted Maguire has been closely involved with would proceed.

A major announcement by the Prime Minister was that the review of water and wastewater would be held over for eighteen months to allow local government to sort itself out.

As advised on Thursday, the Minister of Local Government (Hon Maurice Williamson) also spoke about elected members' remuneration. Firstly, he stated that he had decided no adjustment was to be made at this stage to elected members' remuneration as a consequence of the most recent Higher Salaries Commission review of parliamentary salaries. Secondly, he announced there was to be a thorough principles-based review of the basis of elected members' remuneration. A discussion document outlining options for reporting the remuneration system is being prepared by officials.

As you will now be aware, Otago Regional Council Chair, Louise Rosson, was elected as President of *Local Government New Zealand*, with Philip Warren (Chair ARC) and Gordon Blake (Mayor of South Waikato District) both elected as Vice Presidents.

If, 10 years ago, you had asked me about the probability of 2 of the 3 senior *LGNZ* posts being held by Regional Council persons, I would have been very sceptical. Also, there was a time when I was very doubtful that a Regional Council person would have reached the top office. How wrong I was. In fact, 2 of the 4 Presidents since the Regional Councils joined *Local Government New Zealand* have been Regional Council Chairs. All this does is confirm that Regional Councils have become well accepted as part of the country's local government structure.

Crs Shields and Laidlaw may wish to comment also.

2. **Northern Gateway Proposal**

I have previously commented on a request for \$20,000 from this Council as a contribution towards the Architectural Centre's Northern Gateway Design Project Exhibition and Cr Shields and I were asked by the Council to further investigate funding sources.

Wellington City Council has contributed \$20,000 also.

As previously advised, I have approached Tranz Rail and Centreport, Wellington, seeking a \$5,000 contribution from each. Both have confirmed they will contribute. (Centreport has already done so).

These funds will be used to fund building of the 11 models and the mounting of an exhibition later in the year. All the personal time given by the 11 design teams (of 5 or 6 persons each) is being made on a voluntary basis.

I also confirm that the Architectural Centre will be giving the contribution due recognition at the exhibition of the various proposals later in the year.

Recommendation

That Council confirm a contribution of \$10,000 to be funded from the Transport Budget as provided for in our annual plan and that the Council conveys its thanks to both Tranz Rail and Centreport for their contributions.

3. **Wellington Lifelines Group Decade Function**

The Lifelines Group is about to celebrate 10 years of Lifelines Engineering in New Zealand.

It began in Wellington and has grown to the stage where there are 12 active Lifelines projects throughout New Zealand. It involves both engineering and emergency management services. This Council has already been very active with Lifelines both through the hazard mapping work of our Resource Policy people and Bulk Water Operations.

In this time, we have made considerable progress in reducing the vulnerability of services the Regional Council is responsible for and observed significant improvement with other utility services. We have been able to observe too, first hand the situation in Los Angeles and Kobe following major earthquakes.

It has been agreed to contribute \$2,500 towards the 10th anniversary events.

4. **Water Tour**

We are proposing a further tour of our water facilities for members of metropolitan city councils, in response to requests from three of the city councils.

It will probably take place late in September or October.

5. **Landcare Award**

I was very pleased to learn that Council had received a Landcare Research (NZ) Ltd Award. It was for outstanding achievement in possum control, which has reduced the incidence of Bovine Tb in cattle and deer. The Wellington Region has its lowest levels of Bovine Tb infection since the 1970's, with a 78% reduction in the number of reactor cattle in the last 4 years. It was about that time, at the request of the rural community, that we substantially increased Bovine Tb rates and our efforts have paid off.

6. **FIS Project**

Councillors have requested an update on this project. Mr Schollum has advised me he will be providing an update for councillors in the near future through the Councillors' Bulletin, certainly well before our next Ordinary Council meeting.

7. **Recommendation**

That the Report be received and the contents noted.