



Auckland Regional Council

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OFFICE OF THE CHAIRMAN

15 October 2009

Sue Piper
Chair
Local Government Commission
PO Box 5362
Wellington

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C704-09

Dear Sue

Thank you for taking the time to meet with Auckland Regional Council members to discuss the process for establishing wards, local boards, and the boundaries of the Auckland Council. We appreciated the opportunity to meet and share our ideas with you. Following on from that meeting, I would like to reiterate the ARC's formal position on a number of matters we discussed.

Auckland Council wards and local boards (community councils)

In 2008 the ARC submitted to the Royal Commission on Auckland Governance that Auckland Council wards be based on parliamentary constituencies for election purposes. This would give the council 21 single-member wards (plus additional Maori constituencies). In respect of local boards, our position was that existing community boards should be used as the starting point for establishing local boards, and that additional local boards be created around established communities of interest where no community boards exist.

In 2009 we refined this position somewhat and submitted to the Auckland Governance Legislation Select Committee that there should be:

- 20 general single-member wards
- two Maori single-member wards, and
- 20-30 local boards.

The 20-30 local boards would align with the 20 wards of the Auckland Council, with some wards having more than one local board in its area. In our view, aligning ward and local board boundaries would result in more effective and consistent representation, reflect communities of interest, and integrate local board and Auckland Council activities. In relation to the number of local board members and subdivisions within wards for electoral purposes, the ARC does not have a formal position. When we met on 23 September 2009, we provided you with a copy of the map we submitted to the select committee that illustrates how aligning local board and council ward boundaries could work.

We drew up this scheme as a working model as to our knowledge no one else had attempted this. The 28 local boards align perfectly with the 20 wards (note also two proposed Maori wards). However, there are two variations. First, in the case of the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area, this has

one local board and two wards. In regard to the Hibiscus Coast ward the population level is somewhat lower than the ideal mean. However, in our view these two variations reinforce the overall robustness of the model.

The ARC supports single-member wards as they are associated with greater diversity of candidates, are relatively less expensive for candidates to campaign in than in multi-member wards, and provide a clear line of accountability for elected members to their voters. Smaller wards also mean it is easier for elected members to have face-to-face contact across their ward. It is also much easier for a genuinely independent candidate to be elected to a single member ward than from a multi-member ward.

Having said this, it is fair to say, as you will be aware there is a minority view amongst ARC members that multi-member wards are preferable. That being said the ARC operates on the principle that *'the minority has its say the majority has its way'*.

Southern regional boundary

The southern boundary should be set at the northern bank of the Waikato River and follow the existing boundary of Franklin district to Miranda at the Firth of Thames. I understand that the legislation requires you to set the boundary so that it follows as closely as practicable, the existing southern boundary of the Auckland region, except to exclude the Mangatangi and Mangatawhiri catchments, and the area between the Mangatangi catchment and the Firth of Thames.

I do not believe that there is a practicable boundary that meets this requirement as it splits the Franklin community and places significant and vital infrastructure outside of the Auckland region. The Franklin community of interests extends at least as far south as the Waikato river. Communities at Pukekohe, Waiuku, Buckland, Pokeno, and Tuakau, and the rural areas that are serviced by these towns, are a distinct community of interest that should not be lightly overlooked in boundary decisions. Of note is the Pukekohe wastewater treatment plant, based in Tuakau, which is working at close to full capacity. This services Pukekohe (pop. 13,281), and Patumahoe (pop. 2,259) north of the boundary and Tuakau (pop. 3,504) south of the boundary. Development of Pokeno could result in additional pressure on the plant and costs to accommodate expansion would be problematic if the area the plant services was split between two territorial authorities.

I understand that making significant departures from the requirement in the legislation may not be possible for you but I encourage you to take every step possible to prevent separating Franklin's community of interest and moving vital Auckland water storage dams and regional parks into the Waikato region. This may require the Commission to consult with the Minister.

Apportionment of assets and liabilities

If you are unable to accommodate the Franklin community into the Auckland region, it is imperative that the Auckland Council inherit all regional parks, regional park assets, and all other Auckland assets in the area of Mangatangi and Mangatawhiri. Similarly, Watercare must retain all of its assets in this vicinity. This is not just a question of ownership it is very much a question of *jurisdiction* and the apportionment of rateable assets within appropriate jurisdictions.

The number of people living between the Hunua ranges and the Firth of Thames is 279 or 0.019% of the region's population. The Mangatangi and Mangatawhiri dams account for 54% of the region's bulk water storage capacity. The 11,240 hectares of regional park in the Mangatangi and Mangatawhiri catchments (and the area between the Mangatangi catchment and the Firth of Thames) account for around 28% of the total area of the Auckland regional parks network. The proposed boundary changes would cut through the Hunua and Awhitu Ecological Districts.

In respect of the area of benefit of services provided, the bulk water infrastructure solely and directly benefits Auckland residents. Of those who visit the Hunua, Whakatiwai and Waharau regional parks, 78% are Auckland residents, 11% are international visitors, and 11% are visitors from other regions. There are also strong arguments for leaving these assets in their current ownership based on historical investment and current management standards.

The regional parks and bulk water infrastructure were paid for by the residents and ratepayers of Auckland. They were built, developed, enhanced and maintained for ecological, recreation and water

supply purposes for district and later regional benefit. The bulk of the Hunua Ranges Regional Park was purchased by Auckland City Council between 1920 and 1960. The remainder was purchased or gifted, and managed, including some areas of land which remains in Crown ownership, by the ARC.

Auckland City Council constructed the Cossey's Creek dam in 1955, and the Upper Mangatawhiri dam, which opened in 1965. Regional water management responsibilities transferred to the ARA in 1965, and the ARA constructed the Wairoa and Mangatangi dams, which opened in 1975 and 1977 respectively. Following the creation of Watercare Services Limited in the early 1990s ownership of the infrastructure associated with bulk water supply transferred to Watercare while the catchment parkland remained in the ownership of the ARC.

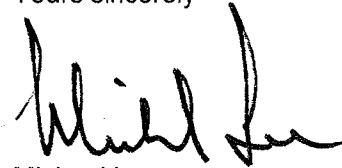
The ARA and later the ARC developed and maintained recreational facilities and services, including lodges, huts, tracks, bridges, carparks, toilet facilities, information boards, historic features, natural heritage features and a dedicated park ranger service. The Council has also maintained a high level of biosecurity and conservation work throughout the ranges, including intensive pest management that assisted in the recovery of kokako in the Hunua Ranges. As I have pointed out this is not purely a question of 'ownership' it is very much a question of jurisdiction and the logical alignment of these two concepts.

Information requested by the LGC

At the meeting with the ARC, you asked about the extent to which the Auckland region can be considered to be rural. I can confirm that 89% of the region's land area is outside the Metropolitan Urban Limit, and is therefore considered to be rural. In terms of population, 11% of the region's residents lived outside the Metropolitan Urban Limit at the time of the 2006 Census.

I trust this information will be useful and I wish you all the best in your decision making. I look forward to seeing your draft proposal once it is released.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael Lee', written in a cursive style.

Michael Lee

Chairman, Auckland Regional Council