

## Speech Notes

### **Auckland region welcome to new MED-led Auckland policy office**

8 July 2005

Mike Lee

ARC Chairman

Tangata whenua, The Hon. Jim Anderton, Hon. Judith Tizard, Mayor Dick Hubbard, distinguished guests from both the private sector and local and central government.

On behalf of the Auckland Regional Council, it is a great pleasure to welcome the new MED-led Auckland policy office to the Auckland region.

The deployment of the Ministry of Economic Development, Ministry of Transport, Ministry for the Environment and the Department of Labour as one office signals a new integrated approach to the work of central government in the Auckland region.

It is a clear signal from the government – that it recognises the Auckland region is important and that this office will make it easier for Auckland businesses and local government to meaningfully engage with central government.

The Auckland region is of course home to 1.3 million New Zealanders – about one third of the country's population – its importance to New Zealand's economy cannot be underestimated.

The establishment of this important central government mission to Auckland comes at a critical point in the history of the Auckland region.

It is a time, you will agree, of great challenges – and of great opportunities.

The establishment of this office demonstrates a sea-change in the way central government relates to the Auckland region – and events in the region this week reinforce that sea-change.

The acquisition by Auckland Regional Holdings of 100% ownership of the Ports of Auckland is a significant new step in the history of the Auckland region. This could have only have been possible because this government had a broader vision for the Auckland region and the need for it's sustainable development. To realise this vision the government thought it essential to reunite, once again, the regional assets with the Auckland Regional Council and this is what it achieved with its passing of the Local Government (Auckland) Amendment Act, just over one year ago.

The 100% acquisition of POAL enables an exciting opportunity for the comprehensive redevelopment of Auckland's incredibly valuable waterfront land – unlocking its enormous potential for the benefit of the region, and indeed for the country.

Ownership of the Port will also be a sound long-term investment for the ARC Group providing vital ongoing funding for development of regional infrastructure.

The total investment in public transport infrastructure and services, led by the ARC Group over the coming year will be \$378 million (a quarter of a billion dollars on infrastructure and a \$149 million on OPEX), with major contributions coming from Auckland Regional Holdings, ARC ratepayers, and central government in the form of Land Transport New Zealand. This unprecedented scale of investment will have an important impact on the economy of the Auckland region.

Another aspect of the sea-change is the implementation of the Auckland Regional Economic Development Strategy. To this end a new board is being set up, chaired by ARC Councillor Michael Barnett, head of the Auckland Chamber of Commerce and with some exciting young business leaders. More from Michael about this at a later date. The ARC has also this week appointed as Group Manager of our new economic development business unit, Clyde Rogers, formerly of Enterprise Waitakere. We are also setting up an economic development forum with membership from local government and the private and education sectors to oversee the economic performance of the region.

The government has given the ARC an important role in economic development – but we also have a vital role in environmental protection, and the two must go hand in hand.

The ARC group investment in public transport infrastructure is part of a bigger picture. It is designed to assist central government in its task in solving Auckland's transport congestion – which, we all know, has significant implications for the region's economic performance.

However, a decent public transport system will also improve our people's quality of life. In the end, quality of life should be the goal of all economic development.

Finally, I'd like to acknowledge Louise Marra, a colleague of many years. We are very pleased to see she is leading this new office.

I welcome this new alignment, as we public servants, in central, regional and local government, work together for a common goal – to achieve sustainable development for the Auckland region and to enhance our people's quality of life.

Thank you and good luck. END