

Royal Commission on Auckland Governance

Office use only

SUBMISSION

Submission number:

Date received:

Name / organisation details

WAIHEKE ISLAND COMMUNITY PLANNING GROUP INCORPORATED

**The Secretary
Mr Christopher Wragge
P.O.Box 49,
Oneroa,
Waiheke Island.**

E-mail: ccwragge@ihug.co.nz

Phone 372 9541

**The Chairman
Mr Pita Rikys
4 Burrell Road,
Waiheke Island.**

E-mail: pitarikys@yahoo.com

Phone 372 2816

We do wish to be heard and / or to be represented at a hearing in support of this submission. We would prefer to attend a hearing within Auckland City, preferably on Waiheke Island.

SIGNATURE(S): _____

(office holder if applicable)

SUBMISSION

Introduction:

WICPG is a community group formed on Waiheke island four years ago with the immediate objective of making input on behalf of the community into the review [and subsequent processes] of the Hauraki Gulf Islands section of the ACC District Plan. The proposed plan has since been notified and the group is making submissions to Hearing Commissioners on the various parts of that Plan. The group functions as an umbrella group for other community groups on the island that send representatives to its meetings.

By arrangement, [which including some funding assistance] with the Waiheke Island Community Board the group agreed to lead a campaign to make the community aware of the Commissions task and to encourage members to make submissions. To that end it has set up and operated a web site containing data about the inquiry, research papers, links to related sites

and submissions from individuals, sector interest groups, and councils. It has also run a public meeting and workshops in the community and prepared and circulated submission templates in a range of forms.

Form of submission:

The submission is in the form of a series of headings aimed at addressing issues raised in the discussion document. Comprehensive analysis, research, expert evidence and case studies will be provided in support of this outline, at the hearings.

AUCKLAND REGION

The current and future well being of the region and its communities

The key objectives for changes to the structures and delivery of local government in the Auckland Region are:

- real engagement of people in their communities,
- understanding of, and commitment to, long term objectives and goals tied to agreed strategic priorities and comprehensive strategic planning,
- real and effective accountability,
- clearly stated and agreed social and economic objectives involving central government agencies and key stake holders such as the business community as well as local government,
- accountable and transparent financial decision making { Shand Report findings }.

Characteristics of good local government

While the list of characteristics provided in the discussion document is fine, the issue is having effective mechanisms to ensure they are delivered. In addition one would have expected [given the focus of the law in this regard] to have seen an additional characteristic worded something like -

commitment to empower local decision making. It follows that up-grading the **Long Term Council Community Plans** provided in the **Local Government Act 2002** to make achievement of community outcomes mandatory, along with existing monitoring and audit provisions, is essential.

Structure of local government

In broad terms, and subject to what follows, a single tier of local government performing regional and district levels functions with optimum decision making at the local level in a local council or board is our most favoured option.

This still requires better mechanisms for integration, communication, consultation, engagement, accountability and collaboration between these two levels than exist in the present system.

Such a structure must optimise engagement at the community / neighbourhood level, with initiatives driven from and owned at that level where ever possible. Specific and appropriate provision for Maori must be provided for within such a structure. In addition important communities of interest must be identified and provided with a voice.

Economic philosophy and planning

The Commission has already been bombarded with a raft of economic plans designed to make the region function more effectively. They all lack two key components, namely a clear declaration of the economic philosophy that the plan represents and involvement by and buy-in from the communities and key stake holders in the region. For an economic vision to work it must have these two key ingredients. Our expat brain drain gives an added reality to this matter which needs to be factored into economic planning.

Environmental conservation, protection & enhancement planning

This provides the other critical half to an essential planning dichotomy and provides the balance needed to address key issues under this heading such as water & energy & landscape & heritage conservation, and climate change, adequately.

Asset management and ownership

The present models have evolved historically and have been shaped by a range of political pressures. Important decisions have to taken as part of long term planning and strategic direction setting that will determine the appropriate level at which key assets in the region ought to owned and how they might best be managed. Retention of strategically important assets in local control is obviously a dimension of this work.

Infrastructure / service delivery

It is important that infrastructure remain in local control and ownership and to some degree this may involve repatriation in relation to disposals in this area in the past. The tendency in the recent past has been towards large scale corporate solutions whereas overseas and local examples are showing that more local solutions optimise community buy-in and provide additional benefits such as creating jobs in local communities. It must be remembered that shareholders have no moral conscience.

HAURAKI GULF AND ISLANDS

We are not happy with the current form of local government in Auckland. In particular we are not happy with the transparency, accountability, responsiveness and efficiency of resource use from decision making by the present forms of local government in the Auckland Region as they apply to the Hauraki Gulf and islands, their peoples and communities and the Waiheke Island community in particular.

We want to see a form or structure of local government that **provides much greater control and decision making at the community level** to effectively provide for community well being and environmental protection. This applies to strategic and long term planning in particular.

Our experience with Auckland City Council is that we have significant difficulties holding politicians and bureaucrats accountable for decisions that are not seen to be in the best interests of our community.

In terms of the present structure we would want to see much more local decision making power given to community level entities.

In terms of new structures whatever is put into place must recognise and provide for the fact that the Gulf Islands are not part of the isthmus and have special ecological and environmental values and an economic and recreational significance that all need to be properly protected and provided for.

The appropriate local government structure needs to be customised to the special needs and challenges of the Hauraki Gulf to recognise its regional, national, and international importance.

That will almost certainly require legislation as areas of jurisdiction currently at regional and district level, such as waste water management, aquifer management, integrated catchment management, control over the Coastal Marine Area and some building controls (sedimentation controls in particular), and design panel inputs, will almost certainly need to be more devolved.

A customised structure can also provide the essential checks and balances needed to ensure environmental and community needs are balanced appropriately. Some assets / services might be better managed in a wider isthmus structure, libraries for example.

Provision within the structure will need to be made for the relationship with key central government agencies, the Department of Conservation, and MAF (regarding marine biosecurity issues), in particular.

Finally for optimum integration, more local control is needed over coastal waters. Better monitoring of the effluent discharges from visiting and moored seacraft is but one need. The 'maintain', 'protect' and 'enhance' objectives in the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park Act 2000 point in this direction.

This would achieve much better local government outcomes for Gulf communities and better serve the interests of the Region and the Nation.
