

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – 15 APRIL 2009

It's not about Mayors, it's about communities

Community organisations are worried that their message about the removal of community voice within governance plans for Auckland is itself getting lost with the media focus on "Mayoral antics".

"The media 'beat-up' of petty squabbles is a smokescreen to the real risk threatening communities; that of having no community voice within the proposed Auckland Council," claims Tony Mayow, Board Chair of Community Waitakere. "Additionally, the abuse of Government's power in overturning the recommendations of a well researched and thorough report that took 18 months to prepare, cost \$3.5 million and had approximately 4000 submissions, is appalling.

Speaking on behalf of Community Coalition for Auckland; *Voices of Tamaki Makaurau*, Mr Mayow went on to say that the Coalition urges Government to "reconsider its position and take the **full** governance report to the select committee so communities can have real comment on its recommendations.

"Rodney Hide, Minister of Local Government, has arbitrarily overturned most of the key recommendations contained within the report, replacing them with rushed, shallow and ill considered decisions."

"It's reminiscent of the 1980's approach of presenting changes as if there is no other alternative, the "TINA Principle". In this case, there certainly are alternatives; they are contained within the Royal Commission's report."

"This isn't about jobs for Mayors – this is about local people having a say in how locally raised rates are spent. This is about local people making sure that the assets and developments precious to their communities are protected; this is about local people having a strong voice at a local level."

The Coalition has requested a meeting with Rodney Hide to present their views but have so far had no response.

"We're not against the idea of a super-city and can definitely see the sense of many of the recommendations made in the original report. Our questions are why has all that good work been overturned? We find it hard to understand why John Key's Government, which has put such emphasis on inclusive processes up to now, is suddenly in such a rush and will not respond to the community voice."

The Coalition is forging networks across the region to present a unified front in opposition to the "arrogant bullying" approach being taken to the most significant change to local government in Auckland's history. Politicians need to hear that the community is not going away.

For further information please contact:

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