



12 March 2010

To Mayors and Chairs

The *New Zealand Herald's* campaign urging Aucklanders to have their say on the new Auckland super city sets a stake in what could be a groundswell of opposition to the Government's proposals for our biggest city.

This kind of campaigning journalism is to be commended on matters where democracy is fundamentally threatened.

It started Monday 8 March with a headline proclaiming "The lock out of Auckland" with the sub heading stating "Hide's plan takes away residents' right to have their say on future of city's jewels."

Reporter Bernard Orsman was of course reporting on proposals for seven council controlled organisations (CCOs) for Auckland.

His story gets to the crux of the issue and reports succinctly what *Local Government New Zealand* has expressly stated; that Aucklanders, and only Aucklanders, have the right to determine the future of their assets through their elected representatives.

The logic behind the Government's CCO proposal is unfathomable. You will know that under the proposals, unelected government-appointed technocrats and bureaucrats will have the power to decide on the future of billions of dollars worth of Auckland's assets – from land to infrastructure to property.

Heavy-hitting commentators such as our own Mayors John Banks and Len Brown, alongside Michael Barnett of the Auckland Chamber of Commerce, expressed dismay at these proposals which could virtually hand over 75 per cent of Auckland's assets to the hands of a few. Of particular concern, the powers of the Auckland City mayor would be as the story put it "neutered" and unable to "deliver the vision and policies he or she was elected to deliver."

As you'll know currently CCOs such as Metrowater have council-appointed directors who report back to councils on their performance, and ensure they meet their objectives as defined by council. Councils have, until now, determined which services would be run by CCOs. The proposed new regime will take away Auckland Council's right to decide on which services should be run by a CCO, thus stripping ratepayers of yet another level of accountability and transparency.

Surely this is anathema to the principles of TAFM developed and driven by Minister Hide? Surely the Government and the Minister must see some irony here?

The *New Zealand Herald* is presenting these very complex but important issues in a way which we hope will get Aucklanders thinking, and acting. I support this call to action. We all know how hard it is to get any level of engagement from an apathetic public, and perhaps we are collectively

to blame for allowing this apathy to go unchallenged. The *Herald* has thrown down the gauntlet, let's pick it up.

Local Government will be working on a variety of programmes encouraging New Zealanders to vote in this year's local government elections for a range of reasons, not least of which is do ratepayers want Auckland to be a model for the future of their assets. Watch this space.

Regards

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'L. Yule', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Lawrence Yule  
President, *Local Government New Zealand*