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Report to Wellington Regional Council
from Margaret Shields, Chairperson

Chairperson's Report

1. Meeting with Minister of Local Government

I meet briefly with Hon Chris Carter, Minister of Local Government, on 12 November. As I reported previously, the Minister is meeting with all local authorities. As the Minister's time was limited, we were only able to discuss a few aspects of the Local Government Bill. At that time, the Minister was confident that the Bill would receive its third reading before Christmas.

The Minister is coming to lunch at the Council on 9 December so that we can continue discussions in a more relaxed environment. I will report back on the lunch at the meeting.

2. Local Government New Zealand Activities

Councillors asked that I update them on activities at *Local Government New Zealand*.

(a) National Assembly of Australian Local Government

I attended the above Conference and it was much more interesting than expected. In passing, it was pleasing to note attitudes towards Aborigines have changed considerably.

Both John Howard and Simon Crean addressed the Conference. Most commonly reported comments from participants were that John Howard presents very well but says nothing, and that Simon Crean is the other way around!

There was a very interesting report from Australian Statistics about the "State of the Regions". We might well like to see this emulated here.

There was also an intriguing report from the Cultural Ministry who noted that while 60+% of Australians thought sport was important or very important, 85% thought arts and culture were similarly important.

Finally, staying in the Casino Hotel was an educative experience.

(b) ***Local Government New Zealand National Council***

The National Council had its last meeting for the year on 19 November. The main issues currently under discussion are:

- ⇒ Local Government Bill – report back due on 10 December. It is hoped that the Bill will be through before Christmas. I am chairing the Implementation Steering Group and John Allard is a member of two of the task groups, one of which he chairs. The first of the Seminars on “Know How” was held on 18 November aimed primarily at CEOs and senior staff. The seminar was significantly over-subscribed. Early problems with issues such as power of general competence seem to have lessened as people become more familiar with the Bill itself.
- ⇒ Transport Legislation – less advanced but it is the intention of Government to have it in the House before Christmas to enable recess study etc.
- ⇒ Civil Defence Emergency Management Act 2002 – this has been in the ‘wings’ for many months and now will form the basis of a (hopefully) much more rational system.
- ⇒ The Gaming Bill – for territorial local authorities this is also a matter of great moment and considerable disagreement as has been the recent actions of SPARC, the successor organisation to the Hillary Commission. Essentially, SPARC has, out of the blue and without consultation, removed from Local Government its tradition of supporting local amateur sport, and is directing almost all its resources towards professionals. We shall hear much more of this.
- ⇒ E-Local Government – this is a big issue. Those with an interest in this might like to read the background papers which I can make available on request.

3. **ProVention Consortium Conference**

I have been asked to attend the ProVention Consortium Conference about building safer cities in Washington from 4-6 December. The Conference is organised by the World Bank and is attracting about 150 people including representatives from various United Nations agencies, the International Red Cross, governments and research organisations. I will report back on the Conference at the meeting.

On the way over, I will be spending a day in London and have a meeting with Judith Mayhew to talk about the present state of the PPPs in the United Kingdom and Europe and congestion pricing. I will also be meeting with Stagecoach who will be showing me the security arrangements at Wimbledon Station.

4. **High Salaries Commission**

I have received a letter from the High Salaries Commission setting out their current thinking on remuneration. The Commission will be writing to each council prior to

Christmas informing them of the size of the indicative pool available for the remuneration of all elected members. The Commission has come to the view that the four criteria – population, expenses, assets and rate of change – do not fairly reflect the responsibilities and workloads of the elected members of regional councils. It has requested from each council more data on their key functions and will use this to assist in setting the indicative pool.

5. Seasons Greetings

To all my Council colleagues, both elected and staff and your families, every good wish for the coming festive season. Enjoy the break and take time to relax with family and friends.

The latter part of the year has been a particularly busy one for councillors and staff, and the pace looks set to continue in the New Year. Thank you to everyone for your input and support in the past year.

Recommendation

That the Report be received.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Margaret Shields', written in black ink on a white background.

MARGARET SHIELDS
Chairperson