

## Northern Action Group Inc.

### **Chairman's report to June 2018 AGM**

This year has seen a lot of ups and downs for NAG, the lowlight of which was the LGC decision last November to 'do nothing'.

To recap:

The much expected interactive 'roadshow' where the Commission would hold meetings with the community and explain the options on the table and their pros and cons never eventuated.

What did happen were four meetings held by the Commission with the communities in Wellsford, Warkworth, Matakana and Snells Beach to hear the community's views on reorganization.

They got plenty (mostly negative regarding the current arrangement) but there was little 'interactive dialogue' between the Commissioners and members of the public. In fact they even used a 'facilitator' to draw people's opinions on various subjects.

However without the Commissioners themselves engaging with the people we do not believe those meetings constituted '*consultation with communities*' as required in the act.

The affected community did not therefore have the chance '*to participate in considering alternative LG arrangements for their area*' (also required by the act.)

This 'Community engagement' aspect of the process is one of the areas we have appealed in the High court.

Next was the release of the Morrison Low report.

This report was released two weeks in advance to selected stakeholders including NAG and AC.

Although it was embargoed for public release for this period someone 'leaked' it to the press who published and highlighted the projected 48% rate increase.

This subsequently turned out to be found wrong, along with a number of other aspects of the report, by an independent peer review.

In the meantime NAG had posed a list of 11 pages of questions on a raft of issues we felt needed explanation but we haven't had any answers to this day.

This is another subject of our appeal in the High court.

As the deadline for submissions approached and we hadn't received any response to our questions we challenged the whole validity of the ML report as being deeply flawed, too narrowly based and developed from an inappropriate model ie Auckland Council. In frustration we decided to commission our own study of financial viability from a highly respected firm in this field Messer's APR Consultants Ltd.

We advised the Commission that it was being done and asked that they refrain from making any decisions until it was completed in a couple of months.

However when it arrived and showed a totally different picture of an NRUC's viability the Commission flatly refused to consider it saying it was too late!!

This report cost one of our supporters (who still wishes to remain anonymous) \$20,000 so you can imagine our frustration.

Consequently another plank is added to our appeal in the High court.

Whilst all this was evolving we had the triennial national elections and despite asking all four of the major parties to bypass this very unsatisfactory LGC process, only NZF would commit to a solution.

Both Tracey Martin and Winston Peters publically committed to giving the North Rodney community a binding referendum on whether or not we stay in Auckland.

The only stated condition was that NZF had to be part of Government.

Naturally, on the strength of that undertaking, we encouraged our supporters to support that party and it is clear from the polling pattern that many did.

Unfortunately NZF has been unable to get support in the House to pass the necessary enabling legislation so it seems highly unlikely now that it will go ahead but we keep looking for opportunities to make it happen.

After the LGC announced, after 4years of deliberations, that their 'preferred option' was to do nothing and that the status quo would prevail, NAG filed an appeal on no less than 11 points of Law and we are currently working through that process.

Not surprisingly we are encountering considerable resistance from the Commission in the process and in particular the release of what we consider significant documents.

Sadly, only last week we learned that even if we do win in court and arrive at the final decision by LGC to recommend that we separate from AC, the government of the day can still veto the whole proposal through several mechanism's available to it (Declining the order in Council , special legislation etc).

Therefore at the end of the day it is still a political decision and with Labour in strong opposition to our leaving the region it seems unlikely that it will happen.

I'm afraid the only glimmer of hope we have (and it is small) is to somehow convince the National party to initiate an enabling Bill for a binding referendum which NZF has said they'd support (unless they too have 'changed their mind!)

Simon Bridges told one of our committee only last week that although they recognize that AC is not working and have plane to do something about it he added that those plans would not include separation of North Rodney.

With both major political parties opposing us I believe our campaign to leave AC is now at a crossroads.

Later in the meeting I would like to hear your views and perhaps do a straw poll on whether you think NAG should carry on and the new committee should search for some fresh new initiative

or

do we 'throw in the towel' leaving our community to continue under the AC umbrella.

In conclusion, even though the future seems bleak I think this 9 year campaign has been well worth the effort.

It has already resulted in the Commission making a number of recommendation to Auckland council on how they should lift their game and they are required to respond to

those recommendations in a few days' time on June 22 with a follow-up in November. Many of those recommendations have clearly been inspired from our proposal and likely would not have been recommended if NAG had not mounted this campaign.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the committee for all their hard work over the past year and also our supporters, especially those of you that have made, sometimes considerable, donations.

Yours sincerely

Bill Townson  
Chairman.