



# ***The Northern Action Group Incorporated***

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## **May Newsletter**

Dear Members/Supporters

We are now nearly half way into 2021 and we continue to work away at our purpose – which is increasingly looking like a long-term campaign. Despite our lack of success in achieving major change, we continue to raise awareness of the need for better governance of North Rodney and Rodney generally and the shameful way in which we are being unfairly treated by Auckland Council.

### **Government review and reforms?**

The Minister of Local Government, Hon Nanaia Mahuta has now come out with the announcement of her panel to review local government for the future. The panel will report to the Minister in April 2023.

Panel members are :

Jim Palmer: Chair - retired Waimakariri District Council chair,  
John Ombler, - ex controller of the all-of-Government Covid-19 response  
Antoine Coffin - director and consultant on building relationships with tangata whenua;  
Gael Surgenor - general manager of community and social innovation at Auckland Council; and  
Penny Hulse - board member at Kainga Ora and Auckland Museum, and deputy mayor after the formation of Auckland's "super city" in 2010.

NAG has significant knowledge and experience of local government in New Zealand gained from our application for a separate unitary authority for North Rodney and our work on local governance issues ranging from representation and boundary changes to the LGNZ's localism project.

We have written to the Minister offering to contribute and participate in this review. Our local list MP Marja Lubeck, has expressed support for our being involved. We will endeavor to use the opportunity to promote ways in which local government can be better structured to provide better governance for communities such as ours in North Rodney. NAG is pleased to note that Marja and our local Kaipara Ki Mahurangi electorate MP Chris Penk have agreed to work together on improving outcomes for Rodney ratepayers and residents.

A copy of our letter to the Minister can be found on our website [here](#).

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## Government cancellation of referenda on Maori wards

I covered this topic in my last newsletter and as you know, since then, the Government proceeded, under urgency, to cancel the provision for referenda on the establishment of Maori wards in local government. This was a direct “big government” attack on localism and the right of communities to set appropriate governance for themselves, reminiscent of how Government took away our rights to vote on the amalgamation of North Rodney into the super-city.

We are not against the adoption of Maori Wards as one way of grouping people for representation within local government jurisdiction areas (e.g. we support a rural/urban type classification to better represent the rural character of Rodney). But to remove the right of ratepayers and residents to choose, by majority, how they will be governed is a constitutional level change that should never have been done without the support of the affected public.

## Referendum

NAG has not given up on the idea that North Rodney residents and ratepayers should be given the opportunity to vote in a binding referendum on whether or not they want to separate their local government area from Auckland’s Not-So-Super-City. The current prospects for getting enough MP’s to support legislation for that appear slim unless the Labour Government decides to support such a change, but we will continue to prepare the documentation to support that referendum.

Our local MPs understand the problems Rodney and North Rodney in particular face under the current AC governance model, and that our democratic right to have a say on amalgamation has never been allowed.

With the passage of time, some people may not want us to leave AC, some may want North Rodney (defined as per our subdivision proposal) to combine with Kaipara (to be a whole of Kaipara Local Government area) and some may still just want to get NR out.

NAG’s position has always been that whatever people want should be respected in a binding referendum and our long term goal is to see that the people are given a chance to have their say.

## Campaigns

As long as it keeps being relevant, our billboard campaign - to draw attention to the poor state of Rodney's roads and against the withdrawal of road improvement and sealing funding, the unacceptable proposal to create a new regional landfill in the Wayby Valley,

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and the exploitation of Rodney's resources to benefit greater Auckland (e.g. targeted rates for public transport [and proposed for drainage] which ratepayers in other LBAs get paid for from their general rates) - will continue.

The billboards also serve to remind people that NAG is active and campaigning for better governance and a better deal on their behalf, even if that does not make news every day!

If you have any ideas for future billboards or comments regarding those we have put up to date, please let us know – by email or posting a comment on our [Facebook page](#).

We will continue to support our campaigns for recall elections and drawing attention to the way Auckland Council is ignoring the needs of Rodney through the blatant denial of resourcing (exemplified by:

- the [regional fuel tax rort](#);
- the unwillingness to do anything about the imbalance in infrastructure assets across local board areas in the Service Level review;
- the denial of adequate funding in the current 10 year budget review; and
- the unwillingness to take action to deal holistically with the Auckland region's waste management challenges.

## **Donations**

THANK YOU! to all our supporters who have donated to help NAG meet our expenses. Your generosity is appreciated and lets us continue to push for a better deal on your behalf.

There are some small costs involved for billboard materials. For the referendum proposal, we can prepare the arguments and background material but will need legal assistance to draft appropriate legislation, so we continue to ask for your financial support to make that happen please!

**Donations** to NAGs Bank Account ASB WW **12 3095 0233547 00**

**Comments** to [northernactiongroup@gmail.com](mailto:northernactiongroup@gmail.com)

## **The Auckland Council 10-year Budget and Long Term Plan.**

NAG's submission to Auckland Council on this consultation was submitted on 22 March. You can view a copy [here](#).

At publication time we don't know what the outcome will be, but we supported the proposed general rate increase: (notwithstanding AC's appalling neglect of Rodney, the need to restore failing infrastructure throughout AC is clear and funding options for AC are currently restricted). We also supported the Local Board's advocacy for more funding for our neglected roading system, and given the proposed rate increase and RFT funds available there is no excuse for AC if it fails to restore the 10 year \$121M roading budget.

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What we said in our email:

*Dear Mayor Phil Goff,*

*Please find attached NAG's comments on your proposed 10 year budget and long term plan consultation documents.*

*As you will see, NAG supports AC's need for a General Rate increase at this time. This should be greater than you propose and we think there are strong arguments for that, as well as for remedying some structural vulnerabilities that have crept into AC's revenue stream base.*

*We argue that targeted rates are increasingly being used as a substitute for General Rate increases needed to cover the cost of essential "basic" services, and an appropriate General Rate increase would avoid that.*

*We continue to argue that AC has structural governance weaknesses that are resulting in inefficiencies and waste we and support more analysis and less politics in investment evaluation, with particular regard to the future cash flow implications of investment choices.*

*At a time of growth we think the costs of future developments should not fall on legacy ratepayers and a focus on user pays for services (especially where there are choices such as in transport) is needed to help ACs finances and reduce the costs of distorting choice.*

*The failure of Government to pre-provide for needed social infrastructure needs to be met by pressure on the Government to deliver, not to allow the costs to fall on ratepayers.*

*And we strongly support Rodney's advocacy for a restoration of the \$121m roading budget. Cutting it to \$40m at a time AC is increasing revenue and investments is hurtful to rodney ratepayers and seen as a political snub and penalty for continuing to argue against wasteful and city centric spending and decision making, by a political majority, at the expense of our rural communities.*

*We know you are better than that!*

*Hoping that our comments will receive your earnest attention and consideration.*

## **Regional Landfill**

We have made individual submissions on the proposed regional landfill in the Dome, and it is appalling to find (by LGOIMA request) that despite LGA and WMA requirements, AC does NO planning for disposal of residual waste and relies entirely on the private sector to provide landfill sites for disposal.

No new regional landfill is mentioned in the Long Term plan consultation and AC is relying entirely on the duly appointed Hearings Commissioners to decide for it whether or not to allow WM's Wayby valley site to be used for a new regional landfill.

This is an extreme abdication of ACs responsibilities to its citizens to consult on important issues affecting plans, an abuse of the Rodney ratepayer minority by the city centric AC

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majority and shows a classic disregard for the management of the environmental commons in Auckland region.

NAG was delighted to see local MPs Chris Penk and Marja Lubeck supporting a petition by members of our Stop the Tip: Save the Dome group, calling for a ban on landfills near waterways.

That's all for now.

Stay Safe!

Yours sincerely

Bill Foster  
Chairman  
Northern Action Group Inc.