

(Royal Commission)



Royal Commission on Auckland Governance
Te Kōmihana a te Karauna mō

Royal Commission on Auckland Governance, 2009

2010

Report: Executive Summary Part 1

[Next >](#) (Executive Summary Part 2)

Summary of Report

1. The Royal Commission on Auckland Governance ("the Commission") was established by the Government in October 2007 to respond to growing concerns about the workability of local government arrangements in Auckland.
2. The objectives of the Commission's inquiry, as set out in its terms of reference, were
 - to receive representations on, inquire into, investigate, and report on the local government arrangements (including institutions, mechanisms, and processes) that are required in the Auckland region over the foreseeable future in order to maximise, in a cost effective manner,—
 - (a) the current and future well-being of the region and its communities; and
 - (b) the region's contribution to wider national objectives and outcomes.
3. The Commission has listened carefully and with an open mind to all it has been told. It has no doubt about what is needed to revitalise local government and to help steer Auckland towards a secure, prosperous, and sustainable future. Maintaining the status quo, or tinkering around the edges, is not the answer. Bold change is required, and that is what the Commission is recommending.
4. In doing so, the Commission has recognised that there is much in Auckland local government that works, and should be retained. There is much to be commended in the way territorial authorities deliver core services and represent their communities, and these strengths will remain at the heart of local government in Auckland. Across the board in Auckland's councils, the Commission saw people with flair, enthusiasm, and commitment working for their communities, their city, and their region. It is the strengths in existing organisations and their people that provide the foundation for the reorganisation the Commission now proposes.
5. This summary of the Commission's full report sets out in brief the case for change and the challenges for Auckland in becoming a leading, and well-governed, metropolitan region. It explores the changes needed in Auckland local government, and describes the key elements of the local government model proposed by the Commission. The summary concludes with an outline of the cost savings and efficiency improvements, and the proposed transitional arrangements for the Commission's model, followed by a full list of the Commission's recommendations.

Why Auckland matters for New Zealand

6. Throughout the inquiry process, the Commission has been concerned to ensure that its recommendations are directed not only to problem solving – identifying and addressing current inadequacies in Auckland governance arrangements – but also to focus beyond this on a common desired future, and the changes needed to close the gap between where Auckland is now, and where it needs to be.

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7. For the future, the Commission sees Auckland as a unique city in the Pacific, one that is able to compete successfully with Melbourne, Sydney, and Brisbane for people and investment, and to achieve world-class standards in quality of life. The Commission anticipates that high liveability factors will remain Auckland's most valued assets, as it is quality of life that differentiates Auckland from other major cities and is central to Auckland's ability to attract and retain talented people and to deliver significant investment and prosperity to New Zealand.

8. In advancing this future, three things should be noted. First, the Commission considers it important that Auckland define itself, and its distinguishing characteristics, in relation to the rest of the world. Given Auckland's geographic location and small size relative to many international cities, being noticed on the global stage will always be a challenge. Defining a clear, positive identity and conveying it consistently and effectively is the best way to differentiate Auckland and to compete.

9. And there can be no doubt that Auckland is in direct competition with other international cities for talent and investment. The world is becoming more urbanised and, as a consequence of globalisation, smaller and more connected. As this happens, place, and the attributes of place, matter more than ever in attracting talented and productive people and capital. The difference is that Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Singapore, and others are all investing more aggressively and more effectively in their future than Auckland is to secure their position as leading cities.

10. Second, it is necessary to understand the connections between the urban challenges that Auckland faces. Environmental and social goals can no longer be seen as being in competition with economic goals, but must all be viewed as part of an integrated strategy essential to Auckland's prosperity. The four strands of well-being identified in the Local Government Act 2002 – social, environmental, cultural, and economic well-being – are inextricably linked and highly interdependent. Outcomes in each of these domains will impact on outcomes in the others. For example, a growing economy creates employment, but it also depends upon a healthy, skilled workforce. In turn, a healthy, skilled workforce depends upon a range of factors that are boosted by a growing economy, such as stable and affordable housing, efficient and accessible transport options, a safe environment, access to health care and education, recreation opportunities, and a sense of connection. The challenge for local government is to take a systemic approach, and manage the inevitable tensions, so that balanced and positive outcomes can be achieved.

11. Third, the disconnect between Auckland and the rest of the country needs to be recognised and addressed. The Commission's report makes the clear and unequivocal case for why Auckland matters to New Zealand. Auckland is New Zealand's only city of scale and is New Zealand's main gateway to the world. The region is now home to more than a third of New Zealand's population and is forecast to have a population of two million people by 2050. Because of its scale, Auckland's success and New Zealand's success go hand in hand. As a large, outward-looking city, Auckland can and should contribute more to national prosperity and productivity than it does now. Commenting on current financial circumstances, the Committee for Auckland observed recently, "It is difficult to imagine how New Zealand can recover, and succeed economically, unless Auckland does".

The opportunity

12. There is opportunity for Auckland. Auckland combines many of the ingredients for social and economic success. It is well linked to other parts of the world. Aucklanders are culturally diverse and cosmopolitan. The region offers a high quality of life, a skilled labour force, and a concentration of education and research facilities. It has a specialised economy and the scale, density, and agglomeration potential (from the clustering of similar industries) for greater productivity. It has an amazing location, with two harbours and significant park reserves, offering top-class recreation and leisure activities. All this is reflected in the influential Mercer Worldwide Quality of Living Survey, which ranked Auckland fifth for liveability out of 215 cities.

13. But change is needed on a number of fronts in order to fuel growth in Auckland's economy, to improve the health and vitality of its communities, and to ensure that the amenities necessary to attract a talented work