

SavePapakura.com welcomes the opportunity to comment on the *Discussion Document — Auckland Council Local Boards*.

### ***SavePapakura.com engages with local communities on the Auckland Governance Reforms***

SavePapakura.com was formed by concerned members of the local Papakura community following a public meeting held in Papakura during May 2009, at which over 1000 people attended. SavePapakura.com with support from the Papakura District Council has held a number of public meetings since May 2009 to keep people informed about the proposed changes to Auckland Governance, and to ascertain the communities' views on the various legislative changes proposed. All these meetings have been well attended by the local community, and SavePapakura.com has also maintained an active website to further inform and support the community through this period. The group supported the public to put submissions into the Second Bill, the Local Government Commission draft report on the proposed boundaries for the wards and boards, and the recent Third Bill.

We are now representing the views the community expressed at the recent public meeting we held in regard to the ATA's discussion documents, and other communications we had received from members of the Papakura community.

### ***Uncertainty over Local Board delegated powers will continue unabated***

SavePapakura.com appreciates that this discussion document provides some shape to the proposed functions and activities of Local Boards; however there is concern that none of these functions or activities will be legislated for, and essentially the Local Boards will rely on the benevolence of the Auckland Council for their decision-making powers. Whilst we recognise that as stated on page 18 '[the responsibilities of local boards may also change as the role of the governing body and the local boards develops.....services provided by Auckland Council will also evolve over time in response to community views, local innovation and decisions by elected representatives](#)', changes to delegated powers have the potential to be either positive or negative for the communities affected.

### ***Local Board meaningful input to Regional Plans***

SavePapakura.com supports the recognition (pg 19) that Local Boards will provide input into the regional strategic plan.

### ***Subsidiary should prevail***

SavePapakura.com is concerned about the comment on page 30 indicating that '[the specific responsibilities of individual local boards will vary depending on the scale, number and type of services delivered in the local board area. This means the responsibilities of one local board may be different to those of another local board.](#)' Whilst there may be a specific facility or feature in

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one board that is not in others, SavePapakura.com believe that in the vast majority of cases the broad range of activities and services would be provided for in each local board area; such as parks, roads, community facilities, and public transport. The above statement could be interpreted to mean that the Auckland Council has the powers to determine the responsibilities of each Local Board and those that may be viewed as at odds with the Auckland Council of the day may have some of their responsibilities withdrawn...the tone of this statement whether implied or real could be open to interpretation by the Auckland Council as used as a threat to non-compliant Local Boards.

***Local Boards must meet locally***

On page 41 the ATA indicates that Local Boards 'are likely to hold meetings locally'. SavePapakura.com as a community based organisation believes that it is essential that Local Board meetings are held within the Local Board area, so that local public attendance can be encouraged and supported rather than hindered.

***Local Service Centres required in each Local Board area***

We also feel strongly that Local Service Centres should be located in each Local Board area. The Local Service Centres will very much be the public face of the Local Board and the Auckland Council, so it is important that they are easily accessible to the local community and enable Local Boards to be seen as effective components of Local Government.

***Local Board Plans***

We are concerned that the Local Board Plans need to be developed taking into consideration the Governing Body's estimated budget. It is not clear how the estimated budget will be determined and the consultation that will have been undertaken in regard to this. The need to take the estimated budget into consideration may place undue constraints on the Local Board in developing the Local Board Plan. Our understanding is that the Local Board Plans should reflect the aspirations of the community. Ideally the budget and timelines for achieving these aspirations should be determined once the community's aspirations are identified (not before).

The suggestion that the Local Board Plan be produced by 30<sup>th</sup> April every 3 years is too short a timeframe for a new Board to put together a draft plan, consult on it, negotiate with Auckland Council and reach a final decision (given Christmas will also be between an October election and the 30<sup>th</sup> April deadline).

### ***Local Board Agreement***

SavePapakura.com is concerned that the ATA indicates that the Local Board Agreement should 'as far as practicable be consistent with the local board plans'. Given the consultation and engagement that will have happened with the community on the Local Board Plan, the agreement should be 'consistent' with the Local Board Plan.

SavePapakura.com believes that the Local Boards should be as 'self determining as possible' in their decisions on local issues. Once a Local Board Plan and budget has been approved and the Local Board agreement reached the Local Boards should be allowed to get on with local decision-making.

### ***Funding policy***

SavePapakura.com supports the need for a local board funding policy, however this needs to be consulted on and agreed with the Local Boards. If agreement is reached with Local Boards on the policy this should assist in minimising the potential for disagreement between the Auckland Councils and Local Boards over funding allocation.

We note that whilst the Local Government (Auckland Council) Act identifies that Auckland Council must adequately fund Local Boards (through a complex funding policy), this discussion document does not provide any critical information on what that may look like. This is very concerning, given that most of the funding will be sunk in Council-Controlled Organisations, with little remaining funds to be apportioned between Local Boards and the Auckland Council.

### ***Targeted rates must not undermine Auckland Council funding Local Boards***

SavePapakura.com remains concerned about the focus placed on the use of targeted rates in this legislation. SavePapakura.com believes there should be some constraints placed on the use of targeted rates, such as a cap based on maximum percentage of total rates collected.

### ***Targeted rates must not disadvantage low socio-economic communities***

There needs to be recognition of the greater difficulty in lower socio-economic areas of their 'ability to pay', if excessive use is made of targeted rates and the potential impact this could have on the provision of services in the very communities that need the provision of council funded services the most.

### ***Targeted rates should not substitute Local Board core funding***

There is also a concern that the Auckland Council could use targeted rates as a means of politically appearing to keep its own rate increases low, whilst still imposing huge rate increases on some communities, for services or facilities that should more appropriately be funded by the Auckland Council.

### ***Regulatory responsibilities***

SavePapakura.com supports the ATA's proposal that Local Boards be able to propose local bylaws. We suggest extending these powers (or decision making) so that Local Boards can make their own bylaws where the bylaw is related to addressing issues of a local nature.

It is also important that bylaws introduced by the Auckland Council do not have a 'one size fits all' philosophy, because what might be reasonable in the CBD area of central Auckland might not be so acceptable in the suburban areas of the Auckland Region (and vice-versa).

### **Conclusion: maximise local decision-making for local needs**

SavePapakura.com supports the ATA's aim to maximise the decision-making powers of the Local Boards and urging the Subsidiary principle of decisions being made at the point closest to the community affected.

The Auckland Region is a huge, richly diverse area; and a 'one size fits all' policy in regard to both non-regulatory and regulatory responsibilities will not work to address the competing and often complex needs of a region. Solutions need to cater for the differing needs of a vibrant CBD area, the liveability of suburban areas and the needs of rural communities.

### **Additional information**

#### ***SavePapakura.com hearing request***

We request to meet with Auckland Transition Agency representatives, for effective communication to discuss these issues. Ideally in the Papakura area.

(We also have a hearing request for our other submission, on Council-controlled organisations.)

#### ***Related information***

Further information that may be of interest includes our submissions to the Select Committee on the Auckland Governance Legislation Second (and Third) Bills. These are available on request.