Local Government in Auckland Submission

21/09/2016

This submission is on behalf of the Ahuroa community. Ahuroa is a rural and lifestyle community about 15 kilometres west of Warkworth and 15 kilometres north west of Puhoi. In 2010, this area along with the rest of Rodney District Council was undemocratically included in the Auckland Super City. Promises were made that “bigger was better” and there would be cost savings and infrastructure and services progressed.

Ahuroa has very few services.

No Public transport

No Street lights

No Footpaths

No Cycle ways

No Walk ways

No Parks

No Reserves

No Sports fields

No Culture centre

No Library

No Water services

No Sewerage

Rail track with no train or station

Unsealed Roads

Ahuroa once rural has become increasingly lifestyle with increasing population and demand for services.

Under the Super City there has been no new infrastructure or services in our community area and in particular we have requested Auckland Council / Auckland Transport progress on sealing our roads, especially the arterial route between Ahuroa and Puhoi. Under the Auckland Transport priority model, it will be another 4 years before the Ahuroa road is started. Here is the schedule:

Ahuroa Road .41Km 4 years
Ahuroa Road .46Km 4 years
Ahuroa Road 5.08Km 6 years
Ahuroa Road .49Km 11 years
Ahuroa Road 2.44Km 30 Years

Martins Access 2.39Km 28 years
Wechs Access 2.98Km 36 years
Komokoriki Hill Road 6.33Km 40 years
Wilson Road .39 Km 41 years
J Tolpohf Road .48Km 54 years
Hawkens Road .97KM 62 years

Ahuroa Valley Road 2.75Km 66 years
Poyner Road 1.45Km 72 Years
Clifford Road .97Km 76 years
Parker Road .94Km 80 years

This timeframe is completely unacceptable and very disheartening to Ahuroa residents realising that they have to continue to pay rates but will have to wait two to four generations before they receive even the most basic infrastructure services. For most of us it is beyond a lifetime.

Previously, under Rodney District Council, steady progress was being made in improving our community and we were getting at least a kilometre of extended road sealing each year on Ahuroa road and other roads in the area.

The real issue is that Auckland Council only budget $1.4 million per annum for extension road sealing for all of Auckland. That is about 1.4 Kilometres. In spite of constant requests and feedback Auckland Council refuse to increase the extension road sealing budget. It needs to be around $100 million per annum to progress significantly. This a pittance compared to the $2.4 billion allocated to the City Rail Link.

Recently, Auckland Council introduced a targeted Transport Levy. I believe they cannot justify this levy to Ahuroa ratepayers given that there is no plan to improve our roads and we have no public transport and the collected money is being diverted to the CBD transport issues. All of the targeted levy collected from Rodney should be spent in Rodney. That is the meaning of a targeted levy. It would be an interesting legal challenge.

Feedback from the Rodney Local Board public consultation showed overwhelming support by Rodney ratepayers requesting road sealing above all other services. The Auckland Council are ignoring the opinions of the very people they serve and making a mockery of consultation as litigated under the Local Government Act.

One can only conclude that Ahuroa has been excluded from the “most liveable city in the world” by the Super City Auckland Council.

The Auckland Super city has failed us. The promises were lies. The rates from our area are being diverted into central Auckland. Costs have spiralled out of control. There are more Auckland Council staff than ever before and a massive blowout on the IT system and now the budget for the Inner City Rail Link is woefully inadequate. So much for bigger is better. Auckland Council is using the Rodney rates to improve the inner city infrastructure. This has little or no benefit to Rodney ratepayers. The outer regions are being left to languish.

As ratepayers we have lost our democratic rights. Under the Super City, Rodney has but one Councillor on a Council of twenty thus forfeiting control to the inner city.

This is further exacerbated by Auckland Council setting up Council Controlled Organisations that has an appointed board. Ratepayers do not have any democratic influence in such appointments.

Somehow Auckland Transport has lost sight of the ratepayers and that the purpose of property taxes is for the benefit of the communities that pay them. Auckland Transport seems completely obsessed with public transport (Ahuroa has none) and solving central Auckland congestion problems. Auckland Transport has no regard for the unsealed roads of Rodney. Auckland Transport have stated that there is no significant benefit in sealing Ahuroa roads. What gives Auckland Transport the right to divert the Ahuroa and Rodney rates into CBD projects. That is miss approbation of funds and certainly not the intended purpose of rates under the Local Government Act.

Legally, both Auckland Council and Auckland Transport are breaking the law. Under the Local Government Act:

11ACore services to be considered in performing role

In performing its role, a local authority must have particular regard to the contribution that the following core services make to its communities:

(a)

network infrastructure:

(b)

public transport services:

(c)

solid waste collection and disposal:

(d)

the avoidance or mitigation of natural hazards:

(e)

libraries, museums, reserves, and other recreational facilities and community amenities.

Section 11A: inserted, on 27 November 2010, by [section 5](http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2002/0084/latest/link.aspx?id=DLM2922424) of the Local Government Act 2002 Amendment Act 2010 (2010 No 124).

Section 11A(e): replaced, on 8 August 2014, by [section 7](http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2002/0084/latest/link.aspx?id=DLM5706843) of the Local Government Act 2002 Amendment Act 2014 (2014 No 55).

17ADelivery of services

(1)

A local authority must review the cost-effectiveness of current arrangements for meeting the needs of communities within its district or region for good-quality local infrastructure, local public services, and performance of regulatory functions.

As can be concluded from the above both Auckland Council and Auckland Transport have failed to provide good quality infrastructure to the Ahuroa community. The blatant disregard of the law by Auckland Council and Auckland Transport has created an unhealthy state whereby ratepayers despise and mistrust their civil leaders. This was born out by the recent Citizen Insights Monitor poll by Colmar Brunton showing a massive 64% of Rodney residents are dissatisfied with Auckland Council. With a reputation score of only 45% Auckland Council obviously have a respect issue and for the CEO Stephan Town comment “I was quite surprised by the reputation score at 45 out of 100, and it being average. I expected it to be a little bit lower than that." Indicates their low performance expectation. The very poor leadership example will eventually lead to anarchy whereby Rodney residents have no respect of the Auckland Council Laws.

Certainly the Super City has failed the Ahuroa community and all other Rodney rural communities. The Super City Auckland Council has realised Rodney ratepayer’s worst fears. They have become a monolithic undemocratic bully to small communities. Rodney would prosper and progress if it left the Super City and formed a small efficient Local Body.

Regards

Glen Ashton

glen.ashton@xtra.co.nz