

Draft

**See National Council Agenda Item 5c**

**Accelerating Sustainable Development:  
Local Action Moves New Zealand**

Local Government New Zealand's review and response to the Local Government Dialogue Paper prepared by ICLEI for the World Summit on Sustainable Development

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## **PREAMBLE**

*Local Government New Zealand*, acting on behalf of all councils in New Zealand, supports the Local Government Dialogue Paper prepared by ICLEI for the World Summit on Sustainable Development titled “*Accelerating Sustainable Development: Local Action Moves the World*”.

We consider that it is a valuable summary of the contribution and effort of local authorities around the world in working for the sustainable development of their communities. It is accurate in its assertion that ‘local action moves the world’.

This paper, ‘*Accelerating Sustainable Development: Local Action Moves New Zealand*’ presents the contribution of local government to sustainable development in New Zealand and provides a response to the challenges listed in the ICLEI paper.

### **About local government in New Zealand**

There are a total of 86 councils in New Zealand comprising approximately 1083 elected councillors, mayors and chairs (of which approximately 32% are women and 5% are Maori). These citizens are elected on the basis of their understanding and potential contribution to community issues. They are elected to develop policy and to provide direction for the community of interest they represent. They are directly accountable to, and representative of, their communities.

Local government in New Zealand operates within the following principles:

- each community must be empowered to actively choose its own direction;
- councils must lead and nurture their communities;
- councils need to fully represent their communities;
- councils must have independence of funding;
- local democracy must be independent of central government interference.

An overarching principle for our councils is that the power of decision-making should rest as close as possible to the communities that those decisions affect.

The 86 councils are divided into two branches – regional councils and territorial authorities. Regional council boundaries tend to be river catchment-based and cover several territorial authority areas. Territorial authority boundaries are based on communities of interest.

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<sup>1</sup> There are 12 regional councils, 70 territorial authorities (comprising 14 city councils and 56 district councils) and 4 unitary authorities (who have both regional and territorial functions). Refer to [www.lgnz.co.nz](http://www.lgnz.co.nz) for more details.

Both regional councils and territorial authorities are responsible for a wide range of activities that contribute to sustainable development.

Regional councils functions cover:

- resource management, including use and quality of freshwater and coastal waters, air quality, catchment control, and soil conservation;
- animal and plant pest management;
- regional civil defence;
- regional land transport planning;
- contracting passenger transport services;
- ownership and provision of regional parks (Auckland and Wellington);
- harbour navigation and safety, and marine pollution.

Territorial authorities functions cover:

- infrastructure provision (roading and transport, sewerage, water/stormwater, waste disposal);
- community wellbeing and development;
- resource management including land use planning and development control;
- environmental health and safety (including building control, civil defence, and environmental health matters);
- recreation and culture.

New Zealand local government is unique in its level of operational autonomy. Unlike many other jurisdictions, local government is responsible for raising approximately 95% of its income with minimal reliance on central government grants.

New Zealand local government has limited responsibility for social services such as public health and community safety. Most aspects of those services are provided directly by central government. Councils have considerable discretion as to how they respond to community concerns, with councils playing a leading role in economic development and filling gaps created by the withdrawal of government services.

### ***Local Government New Zealand***

*Local Government New Zealand* is the national voice of all 86 local authorities in New Zealand. We represent the diversity of local democracy and of local government – the metropolitan areas, the districts, the rural communities and the regions.

*Local Government New Zealand* has a President, Basil Morrison, and is governed by a National Council of 14 elected councillors, mayors, and chairs from councils around New Zealand.

*Local Government New Zealand* presents a consensus view and is the only organisation that can speak on behalf of all councils in New Zealand.

This “review and response” paper was prepared with the assistance of the Local Government Sustainable Development Project Team and released as a draft for consultation with all local authorities<sup>2</sup>. The draft was then amended to reflect the views of local authorities and adopted by the National Council of *Local Government New Zealand*.

## **Overview – local government and sustainable development**

During the last ten years, there has been significant reform in New Zealand’s public sector, including local government. Councils have had to institute new management systems, combining good business and public management principles. Clear financial performance requirements and accountability are an integral part of these systems.

At the same time, central government has reassessed how and where it delivers some services. As a result, communities throughout New Zealand have turned to their councils to play a greater role in the resolution of social, environmental, and economic issues, with the result that councils have become involved in initiatives covering a range of policy areas.

In response to changes in national health policy, for example, many councils have become advocates to protect and often enhance their citizens’ access to services. Some have become providers of facilities, such as medical centres, as a way to retain medical professionals in their districts, while others have worked collaboratively with health providers to develop sustainable community-based initiatives.

Changing social and economic conditions have also resulted in councils taking a more active interest in how central government policy affects the community at the local level. This has been reflected by councils and their Mayors playing strong advocacy roles – lobbying central government to protect essential community services that might be under threat and encouraging employment and regional development opportunities. “Mayors for Jobs” is an example of this focus. Councils are also playing a greater role in monitoring the effectiveness of central government-provided services in their districts, as well as promoting local collaboration and co-ordination.

## **Central/Local Government Partnership**

Officers from Local Government New Zealand have been working with senior officials from Government Departments on a New Zealand framework for sustainable development.

The vision espoused by these officers and officials is to create:

- a land where diversity is valued and reflected in our national identity;

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<sup>2</sup> The Local Government Sustainable Development Project Team is made up of leading representatives from local government who have a particular interest in **furthering** the principles of sustainable development listed in Agenda 2 1.

- a great place to live, work, learn, and do business;
- a birthplace of world-changing people and ideas;
- a place where people invest in the future.

The key role of local government, as proposed in the recently introduced Local Government Bill, involves local government acting on behalf of individuals and their communities and promoting their social, cultural, economic, and environmental wellbeing, now and for the future.

Central government and local government have significant roles to play in administering the legal frameworks that underpin sustainable development, such as the Resource Management Act and the Biosecurity Act.

The creation of a regular central government/local government forum in 1999 comprising the leaders of both levels of government, represents a formal commitment to work through issues of common concern. The forum has three long term objectives:

- to identify key issues of significance to either or both parties, and agree priorities;
- to identify issues of common interest and explore opportunities for jointly resolving them;
- to give and receive feedback on the contribution of each sector on matters of shared national and local importance.

The forum is a high profile example of the increased involvement of local government in central government policy-making. Other recent examples include the development of the New Zealand Waste Strategy, and current work on transport policy.

## **PART 2: Priorities for Local Sustainability**

### **1. Issues to be addressed**

The Dialogue Paper prepared by ICLEI identifies three priority issues for local government to progress:

- poverty and inequity;
- insecurity;
- environmental degradation.

Of these, environmental degradation is the most salient issue facing New Zealand local authorities. We have also identified some additional priority issues, specific to our councils. Comment follows on these issues.

#### **1.1 Poverty and Inequity**

Poverty and inequity in New Zealand is certainly not on the same scale as it is in other developing countries. However, these problems do face some communities in our country. They are typically manifest as health problems, social exclusion, substandard housing and location-specific unemployment.

These problems are sometimes exacerbated at a community level where councils in low socio-economic areas are struggling to deliver statutory services such as sewerage treatment services, because of the cost and the standards prescribed by central government. The lack of revenue available to these jurisdictions means that they are less able to exploit development opportunities than more affluent councils. Some of this inequality is being addressed by new central government initiatives to kick start regional development, and by assistance programmes.

Despite their limited income bases, many councils have instituted variable charging regimes for the facilities and services they provide, charging low income citizens lower rates for access to swimming pools for example. Many council services are easily accessible to all of the community by being funded through the general rate rather than direct user pays (eg. Libraries).

#### **1.2 Insecurity**

Insecurity is not an issue that affects sustainable development at the local level in New Zealand. We enjoy relatively stable governance and social institutions, minimal conflict of the nature suggested in the Dialogue Paper, and have systems in place that ensure our economic resources can be sustained.

### **1.3 Environmental Degradation**

Environmental degradation is a concern that local communities share on a global scale. We all want to ensure that our children and grandchildren will have the same (or a better) environment than we enjoy now. One of the key tools that New Zealand communities have to achieve this outcome is the Resource Management Act 1991.

Under this Act, local authorities have many and varied responsibilities for environmental management, protection and enhancement. Significant progress has been made in resolving environmental issues, for example, the untreated discharge of sewerage and factory waste to the environment. The challenges that remain tend to be more complex and multi-faceted, such as:

- the decline in the habitat and number of our native species;
- the degradation of some of our soils;
- the volumes of waste that we generate, and the inefficiency of our use of resources;
- the increase in use of energy;
- the volume of gas discharges that contribute to climate change;
- the invasion of unwanted plants and pests to locations where they are not wanted;
- the clogging of our urban streets and state highways with ever increasing volumes of traffic.

The resolution of these issues will require the adoption of new and more integrated methods for achieving change, including the use of communication and marketing techniques to shift the hearts, minds, and attitudes of New Zealanders, to the way that they view their environment.

### **1.4 Other Priority Issues for New Zealand Local Authorities**

Local government in New Zealand is playing a key role in providing a base for the achievement of an integrated “whole of government” approach to responding community needs and preferences at the local level. While central government struggles to deal with the problems caused by fragmentation and “silo” structures, many councils are facilitating local and regional networks to assist public service providers to coordinate and deliver their services in a more integrated way.

Local government is undergoing a major period of reform which will broaden its powers and require councils to work more closely with other agencies in their communities. The focus of the new local government legislation will be on long-term planning and more participatory forms of decision-making, especially in regard to the definition of community outcomes.

Over the last decade councils have begun to work with organisations (Iwi Rununga) representing the indigenous people of New Zealand. Considerable experience has already been gained and councils are continuing to learn and improve relationships with those groups. Many councils have developed memoranda of understanding with Iwi



Rununga organisations, defining their commitment to work collaboratively and seeking out opportunities for Maori to play an active role in council policy and decision making.

With our achievements comes a responsibility – particularly to our South Pacific neighbours, to share our knowledge and build capacity of these nations. Our focus could be both on providing guidance about the institutional arrangements that support local democracy, and/or about the provision of basic infrastructure, ie, roads, water supply and waste disposal systems.

*Local Government New Zealand* and some councils have contributed to this focus. *Local Government New Zealand* has prepared a proposal to develop partnerships between councils in New Zealand and those in the Pacific for the purpose of enhancing sustainable development, governance, and technical capacity.

## PART 3: Progress Achieved

Generally, New Zealand can hold its head up reasonably high – in terms of the degree to which it satisfies the principles of Agenda 2 1. This is reflected in the many “strategies” and related initiatives developed over the last year.

Those with a particular impact on local government include:

- The Resource Management Act;
- New Zealand Waste Strategy;
- Draft Biosecurity Strategy;
- Biodiversity Strategy;
- Tourism Strategy;
- Energy Efficiency and Conservation Strategy;
- Draft Transport Strategy; and
- the Government’s “preferred policy package to manage greenhouse gas emissions”.

Our domestic law and policy firmly entrench the principles of sustainability and our institutional arrangements recognise the principles of subsidiarity.

A number of other Government reports have been prepared, and actions taken, over the last two years that will assist local government in its thinking about sustainable development (attachment 1).

These include:

- Sustainable Development Indicators: this report will be issued by the Government statistician in August 2002. It brings together a set of indicators that might be used to measure whether New Zealand is in fact taking a sustainable development approach over time;
- Report on Population Change and Implications for Sustainable Development: this report uses current population projections for New Zealand over 50 and 100 years, and analyses the implications of these projections for social, economic, environmental, and cultural change.
- Growing an Innovative New Zealand: this report outlines the growth and innovation framework that is guiding Government’s development thinking. The document contains a set of well-developed principles that may well yet be entrenched in the proposed New Zealand Sustainable Development Strategy.
- The Social Report: this report was prepared by the Ministry of Social Development and describes issues relating to human capital, living standards, and

social cohesion, insofar as these may affect the achievement of sustainable development principles.

- The New Zealand Health Strategy: this document was prepared by the Ministry of Health and describes the health matters that may influence the achievement of sustainable development principles.

Particular comment follows about: the proliferation of Local Agenda 21; climate protection; sustainable water and land use; and social development.

### **3.1 Proliferation of Local Agenda 21s**

ICLEI's Dialogue Paper acknowledges that the global response to Agenda 21 has been inconsistent and inadequate. However, it makes the point that "local governments have responded strongly and are implementing Local Agenda 21 (LA21) as a strategic tool for conserving and managing local environments and fostering good governance".

Seven local authorities have formally adopted Agenda 21. A total of 30% of councils either refer to their strategic plans as Agenda 21 documents or make reference to agenda 21 principles and processes in their strategic plans. Other local authorities have adopted comparable programmes, eg, Manukau, Masterton, Hutt City and Waimakariri are part of the "Healthy Cities and Communities Programme". Waitakere City Council is a leader in espousing the principles of Agenda 21 and is known as an "eco-city". The Auckland Regional Council, together with the cities of that region, has adopted a Growth Strategy that firmly embraces the principles of Agenda 21.

Other local authorities have applied the other tools available to them for achieving the same outcomes, and in fact, have largely chosen not to implement LA21.

The Resource Management Act requires local authorities to produce regional/district plans and policy statements. These documents set out the resource management issues for the region/territory and provide the council with a process for "engaging" communities in their resolution. The purpose of the Resource Management Act is to promote the sustainable management of natural and physical resources. The Act allows for the use, development, and protection of resources in a way which enables people and communities to provide for their social, economic, and cultural wellbeing, and for their health and safety, while at the same time:

- sustaining the potential of those resources to meet the needs of future generations;
- safeguarding the life-supporting capacity of those resources;
- avoiding, remedying, or mitigating any adverse effects of activities on the environment.

The Local Government Act also establishes a framework for resolving “sustainability” issues. The Act currently requires local authorities to produce:

- Annual plans;
- Strategic plans;
- Long Term Financial Plans.

This framework underpins local government’s accountability to its citizens and ensures that decisions about public services are made in a public context in which the costs and benefits are identified and the views of citizens and organisations considered. It provides a context in which councils are able to make decisions in a manner which is “informed” by the view of those affected by the decisions.

The regime put in place by the Local Government Act is currently under review. It is clear that the new legislation will make the business of local government even more the business of working for the sustainable development of communities.

The new Local Government Bill defines the purpose of local authorities as being “... *to enable local decision-making, by, and on behalf of, individuals in their communities, to democratically promote and action their social, economic, environmental, and cultural wellbeing, in the present and for the future.*”

Under the new Act, every council will have to adopt processes to prepare a Long Term Council Community Plan (LTCCP). This makes long-term strategic planning a compulsory component of local government planning. Through these processes, councils will have to engage with their communities to identify community outcomes and priorities. The LTCCP provides a mechanism to link council activities with the methods for achieving these outcomes.

Integrated decision-making and coordinated resource allocation is promoted by enabling the activities of others (e.g. central government) to be linked into this process. The LTCCP acts as a basis for accountability of the local authority to the community. It requires a medium-long term focus for decisions.

Production, implementation and monitoring of each of the plans, strategies and policy statements required under the Local Government Act and the Resource Management Act requires substantial input from local authorities. Collectively, they add up to achievement of the principles which are similar to LA2 1, without having to create a separately titled document.

As a further mechanism to entrench commitment to the principles of Agenda 21, the Local Government New Zealand Sustainable Development Project Team have invested considerable energy in:

- defining the work needed to shape understanding about sustainable development (definitions, principles, context, SWAT analysis of council needs etc);

- considering how the group could assist to build the capacity of local government in relation to the implementation of the principles of sustainable development (local government implementation, best practice toolkit, networks etc);
- considering what might be included in a local government statement on sustainable development; (a “proposed statement” is included with this report, as attachment 1).

### **3.2 Climate protection**

The Government has resolved to ratify the Kyoto Protocol, and has developed a preferred policy package for managing climate change.

Local government has a key role to play in implementing these preferred policies. Local government is:

- an advocate and leader of the community in encouraging reductions in greenhouse gas emissions;
- a generator of greenhouse gases, eg, through management responsibility for landfills and transport;
- a regulator of activities that generate greenhouse gases, eg, through the Resource Management Act, the Building Act, and the Local Government Act;
- a mitigator of greenhouse gas emissions, eg, through improvements to urban form and transport systems, biodiversity enhancement, energy efficiency, and waste minimisation;
- an adaptor to the effects of climate change, particularly in assisting communities to change their land use to a form that better matches emerging weather patterns.

As part of the preferred policy package, the Government has committed to working with local government to:

- establish a framework for council activities that assists them to achieve greenhouse gas reductions and guides them in undertaking activities that have climate change co-benefits;
- provide nationally consistent methods for measuring emissions;
- create a climate change network for councils.

### **3.2 Sustainable Water Use & Waste Management**

The sustainable management of fresh water is one of New Zealand's most significant environmental challenges, since water under-pins the natural systems that support much of our primary production based economy. There are several areas in New Zealand that are prone to seasonal drought, and other areas where available supplies of water have been fully allocated.

New Zealand has made considerable progress in reducing discharges of sewerage and industrial waste into our waterways and coastal areas. Even so, some rivers and some popular beaches do not, at all times, meet the standards defined as being suitable for swimming. Farming practices and sustainable site-specific sewerage schemes in these areas have contributed to low land/water quality problems.

Regional councils have taken the initiative to improve the quality and allocation of water. In addition, major industry groups such as the dairy industry, are participating in programmes to improve the water quality impacts of their agricultural management practices.

In response to New Zealand's growing waste problem, the Government, in partnership with local government, has developed the New Zealand Waste Strategy. The vision of the Strategy is "Towards Zero Waste and a Sustainable New Zealand". This vision is underpinned by three core goals which reflect a sustainable approach.

These are to:

- lower the cost of waste and the risks to society;
- reduce environmental damage from generation and disposal of waste; and,
- increase economic benefit by using material resources more efficiently.

### **3.3 Sustainable Land Use**

Primary responsibility for land management has been devolved to regional and local government. Monitoring undertaken by regional councils indicates that land use in New Zealand is increasingly moving to patterns that are sustainable. To achieve this goal both the Government and local authorities have:

- developed land management policy within resource management plans;
- actively assisted with the soil conservation and land rehabilitation efforts of landowners;
- promoted the adoption of environmental management systems and best practice guides;
- implemented the New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy.

### 3.4 **Social Development**

Since 1989, when local government was extensively reformed, councils in New Zealand have provided many effective opportunities for citizen engagement. Local authorities have displayed a willingness to try out new and innovative ways of engaging with citizens and community organisations. Significant initiatives have also been taken to involve youth, Maori and minority groups, in different local authorities.

Councils have also developed sector-oriented strategies targeted at the needs of their elderly residents and, in some cities, their children and youth. Such strategies contribute to social development by enhancing community belongingness and inclusiveness.

Devolution and community involvement in decision-making builds social capital by strengthening local networks and building trust in democratic institutions.

Many councils have established devolved structures, such as community boards or community committees, to bring decision-making within reach of citizens and to break down the hierarchical barriers of traditional organisations.

While councils ability to promote social development is limited by their revenue-raising tools and the limited role they play in the delivery of social services, there is increasing recognition of their contribution through the provision of infrastructure and an environment that builds stronger communities.

## **PART 4: Barriers**

Many of the barriers to the achievement of sustainable development identified in the ICLEI report do not fully apply to New Zealand. However, there is always scope for improvement, as noted below.

### **4.1 Government Structures, Capacity & Institutional Frameworks**

The tension between local government wanting greater accountability and devolution of responsibility, but correspondingly, needing additional funding to undertake those increased responsibilities, is yet to be resolved. The Local Government (Funding Powers) Act 2002 improved the situation, but still linked funding entirely to rates calculated on either the land value or the capital value, of a property.

The new social and economic development responsibilities emerging for local government out of the review of the Local Government Act imply that new and different systems of funding will need to be considered. These new ways of funding local government activities will need to be explored from first principles, reflecting the nature of the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy and society.

Such a review would need to consider:

- the national benefits that are achieved from local investment in, for example, clean water and tourist facilities,
- tools available for funding, and
- tax opportunities.

### **4.2 Legitimacy in Governance**

More participation in governance at all levels is also required. One of the factors behind the falling turnout in local elections is a substantial lack of understanding of New Zealand's constitutional framework and system of government. A programme of citizenship and civic education in schools, and a broader communication strategy for communities is required.

### **4.3 Jurisdictional Conflicts & Compartmentalisation of Government**

A challenge for local government is to further encourage central government to adopt a more integrated approach to its decision-making and outcomes. This will require a move away from a silo mentality.

### **4.4 Concentration of Economic Power**

New Zealand has just emerged from a fifteen-year period in which market solutions and pricing based incentives were the dominant means of managing behaviour. The current approach places a much higher emphasis on leadership and comprehensive planning. An example is provided within the Government's recently released Transport Policy. The



focus of this policy is towards “a sustainable, safe, well-funded but affordable transport system that contributes to the achievement of dynamic, efficient, sustainable and cohesive communities.” Previously, transport expenditure priorities were determined largely on the basis of a centrally determined benefit / cost formula. A more comprehensive approach is now adopted that more clearly recognises the relationship between community needs, land use, the environment, and the economy.

#### **4.5 Allocation and Management of Resources**

In general terms, local government has access to the financial and human resources that enable it to implement sustainability initiatives. Some equity issues arise and Government is moving to provide grants and other assistance to overcome these problems but not to the point of distorting land and resource development decisions.

The removal of agricultural incentives in 1988 was the single most important contribution that the Government made, in that decade, to the achievement of sustainability. The effect of the removal of the subsidies was to take away the incentive to develop land for agriculture that was not capable of sustaining pastoral, or other land uses.

#### **4.6 Lack of Political Will**

New Zealand has a three-year election cycle. This tends to work against long-term sustainability goals. The decision to adopt a ten-year time horizon for the Long-Term Council Community Plans Act may help to broaden the timeframe applied to decision making.

#### **4.7 Communicating Sustainable Development**

Local authorities and the Government are increasingly recognising the importance of marketing the application of well-developed communications strategies as a key tool for changing the hearts and minds, and therefore behaviour, of New Zealanders toward the environment.

The campaign currently being implemented by Auckland Regional Council is an example of this approach. The broad object of the Auckland campaign is to encourage New Zealanders to understand and take personal responsibility for their resource use and more clearly recognise the impact that their actions may have on the environment.

#### **4.8 Sustainable Development**

The language of sustainable development has acted as a barrier to its adoption. A communication strategy needs to be implemented that “dejargons” sustainable development, and at the same time establishes meaningful targets that are able to be implemented and owned at individual, family, and community levels.

#### **4.9 Production & Consumption Patterns**

New approaches to production and consumption are required that enable development and growth, without extinguishing the opportunity for future generations to enjoy similar gains.

New Zealand has gone through a period in which economic growth has been closely tied with increasing consumption of resources, increasing energy use, increasing volumes of waste, and decreasing levels of resource use efficiency. Local Government recognition of the need to achieve growth and development, without having an impact on the environment, has some way to go.

#### **4.10 Overcoming Barriers**

New Zealand local government is ideally placed to be “at the frontline” in delivering the principles of sustainable development. However, they cannot work alone. Greater integration of national and local policies is required here, as it is in other countries.

The challenge that we all share is that of engaging in “meaningful consultation and partnerships”, while at the same time not stifling decision-making with excessive “process”.

The negative perceptions and corresponding mistrust of local government by some groups in our society, particularly Maori and one or two NGO’s, will also need to be overcome if consultation and partnerships are to be used to the advantage of everyone.

## **PART 5: Strategies For The Future**

The Dialogue paper prepared by ICLEI titled “Local Action Moves the World” outlines a number of strategies that, if adopted, would enhance the role of local government in contributing towards the achievement of sustainable development. These include:

- redesign local government for sustainable development;
- increase resources available to local government;
- invest in local leadership;
- strengthen public mechanisms for local sustainable development;
- govern strategically for concrete local impact;
- create working alliances between spheres of government;
- institute ecosystem based planning;
- reduce barriers to decentralise cooperation;
- mobilise all spheres of government to fulfil international commitments;
- adopt sustainable, cultural norms as the guiding principles of public policy;
- use procurement to create markets for sustainable products;
- use public investment to promote sustainable consumption patterns; and
- accelerate the transition to sustainable communities and cities by undertaking risk management, planning transition to sustainable fuels, and investing in resource efficient structures.

Local government in New Zealand can take pride in the progress made on many of these initiatives. The framework that will be provided by the amended Local Government Act will accelerate engagement. However, there is still much to be done.

In addition, a number of key policy initiatives have been identified by *Local Government New Zealand* as being of priority importance for action by the new Government. These include:

- further fine-tuning the Resource Management Act;
- providing financial support for building the capacity of local government to undertake its regulatory responsibilities with minimal compliance costs;
- implementing the New Zealand Waste Minimisation Strategy;
- adopting a partnership approach, with an emphasis on non-regulatory instruments, to the achievement of biodiversity gains on private land;
- adopting a partnership approach to initiatives that will reduce the emission of greenhouse gases;
- actively implementing the National Energy Efficiency and Conservation Strategy;

- exercising leadership in promoting and understanding the constraints and opportunities associated with genetic engineering;
- giving priority to the preparation of a robust biosecurity strategy;
- committing to the ongoing funding of quality implementation of the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms regime;
- reviewing the acquisition, revocation and management powers associated with the provision of open space and reserves for communities;
- giving financial assistance to “less well off” communities to assist them in their provision of quality drinking water systems and wastewater systems;
- enhancing support for rural communities and rural GP’s;
- adopting a partnership approach to the regulation of food premises, the enforcement of hygiene standards, and the promotion of healthy communities;
- committing to making amendments to utilities law in order to provide for more appropriate public management of road corridors;
- committing to ensuring that investment in broadband technology will benefit all communities in New Zealand;
- undertaking a comprehensive review of emergency services in partnership with local government;
- adopting technical amendments and capacity-building initiatives in relation to the Building Act;
- restoring the partnership between central and local government for the provision of social housing;
- completing a review of the Public Works Act;
- enhancing funding for regional museums;
- improving regional statistics.

The above list of actions is quite particular in its focus. At the broader, level a set of strategies could and should be developed in a partnership between central and local government. These include providing clear leadership in a coherent framework such as a “sustainable development strategy for New Zealand to guide thinking”. Also important are ongoing actions that build understanding amongst central government officials of the principles of local democracy and the effectiveness of local government. Programmes

are required that assist central government officials to understand that local government is the place where social, economic, environmental, and cultural aspects come together.

In addition “language” is important. The jargon of sustainable development is a barrier in itself. Our focus should be on “development” as opposed to “growth”. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, is the need to develop targets and indicators that enable progress towards sustainability to be measured in simple and clear ways.

A further and very practical initiative is to capitalise on the momentum and interest that will centre around the World Summit on Sustainable Development, to be held in Johannesburg in September 2002, by convening workshops and a national conference to share the learning gained from the Summit and to agree on a concrete agenda for action.

## **PART 6: Conclusions**

Sustainable development needs to be centred around local communities, now and in the future, but within a frame established nationally and internationally.

The key challenge for local government is to find ways to grow our economic wealth, for ourselves and future generations, without compromising the quality of the environment. At the same time we need to develop our communities in a way that gives people identity, creates a sense of belonging, and promotes a connection to cultural heritage.

Local Government New Zealand looks forward to providing leadership and assisting our local authorities to achieve that vision.

## ATTACHMENT ONE

### Sustainable Development Initiatives

- The World Summit in Sustainable Development (Rio + 10) will take place in Johannesburg from 26 August to 4 September 2002. Bob Harvey, Neil Clarke, and Peter Winder are part of the official New Zealand delegation attending the Summit
- During the week immediately prior to the Summit (27-30 August 2002) the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) will host a pre-meeting event titled “Local Actions Move the World”. ICLEI have prepared a dialogue paper as the basis for discussion at the pre-meeting. This document includes an outline of “strategies for the future”.
- The Local Government Bill states that its purpose is to:
  - *“enable local authorities to play a broad role in promoting the sustainable social, economic, environmental, and cultural wellbeing of their communities, and...”*
- The Local Government Bill provides the first Government manifestation of a commitment, in law, to sustainable development. The Bill defines the purpose of local authorities as being “...to enable local decision-making, by, and on behalf of, individuals in their communities, to democratically promote and action their social, economic, environmental, and cultural wellbeing, in the present and for the future.”
- The concepts that underpin sustainable development have been embraced within the Resource Management Act, and within the New Zealand Waste Strategy, draft Biosecurity Strategy, Biodiversity Strategy, Tourism Strategy, Energy Efficiency and Conservation Strategy, Draft Transport Strategy, and the Government’s “preferred policy package to manage greenhouse gas emissions”.
- A requirement of participation in the World Summit on Sustainable Development is that a “country profile” project be prepared by each attending country. Our Government has prepared a document titled “Living for Tomorrow, Today: An Assessment of New Zealand’s Sustainable Development 1992 – 2002”. This document includes a two-page statement under the heading “Local Government and Sustainable Development.”
- Earlier this year the Government indicated that it intended to develop a “New Zealand Sustainable Development Strategy” as a framework to achieve cross-government department commitment to the principles of sustainable development. A senior officials group has been working on this document for most of the year.
- A draft document titled “Towards Sustainability in New Zealand: The Government’s Approach to Sustainable Development” has been prepared but not circulated. The status of this document is uncertain. The report may well become simply a

“Government Statement” to inform and assist New Zealand delegates in their participation at the Summit. Another option is that the document becomes a background report to assist the development of the proposed New Zealand Sustainable Development Strategy.

- All world leaders have an opportunity to make a seven-minute speech at Johannesburg. This speech is known as the “Leaders Statement.” A speech is currently being prepared for delivery by Rt Hon Helen Clark to the Summit.
- The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment, Dr Morgan Williams, has prepared a report titled “Creating Our Future: Sustainable Development for New Zealand” for release immediately after our conference in July 2002. This report reviews New Zealand’s performance against the principles of sustainable development.
- A number of other Government reports have been prepared to assist with thinking about sustainable development. These include:
  - Sustainable Development Indicators: this report will be issued by the Government statistician in August 2002. It brings together a set of indicators that might be used to measure whether New Zealand is in fact taking a sustainable development approach over time;
  - Report on Population Change and Implications for Sustainable Development: this report uses current population projections for New Zealand for 50 and 100 years, and analyses the implications of these projections for social, economic, environmental, and cultural change.
  - Growing an Innovative New Zealand: this report outlines the growth and innovation framework that is guiding Government’s development thinking. The document contains a set of well-developed principles that may well yet be entrenched in the proposed New Zealand Sustainable Development strategy.
  - The Social Report: this report was prepared by the Ministry of Social Development and describes issues relating to human capital, living standards, and social cohesion, insofar as these may affect the achievement of sustainable development principles.
  - The New Zealand Health Strategy: this document was prepared by the Ministry of Health and describes the health matters that may influence the achievement of sustainable development principles.
- The Secretary-General of the United Nations has prepared a report titled Implementing Agenda 21. This 250-page report provides the Secretary-General’s views on how each of the various chapters of Agenda 21 have been progressed since the last summit in Rio de Janeiro ten years ago.



- A “Draft Plan of Implementation for the World Summit on Sustainable Development” has been prepared by the Secretariat of the Summit. This draft plan has been the focus of a number of preparatory committee meetings held in advance of the World Summit. The most recent of these preparatory meetings was in Bali, 27 May-7 June 2002. Agreement on three-quarters of the draft document was achieved at that preparatory meeting. Some of the key issues yet to be resolved related to globalisation, trade, elimination of subsidies, and implementation of the Millennium Declaration and the Dohar Agreement.
- *Local Government New Zealand* has established a Sustainable Development Project Team. This team has met on three occasions. The team has invested considerable energy in:
  - defining the work needed to shape understanding about sustainable development (definitions, principles, context, SWAT analysis of council needs etc);
  - considering what might be included in a local government statement on sustainable development;
  - considering how the group could assist to build the capacity of local government in relation to the implementation of the principles of sustainable development (local government implementation, best practice toolkit, networks etc);
- The Ministry for the Environment has been leading a project exploring concepts and implementation issues associated with triple bottom line reporting. This project will be completed towards the end of the year.
- *Local Government New Zealand* is a member of the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA). IULA have prepared a statement to be submitted to the World Summit on Local Government and Sustainable Development.
- The Chief Executive of ICLEI for Australasia will deliver a keynote speech on Day 1 of our Local Government Conference in Rotorua. The speech is titled “An International Perspective on the Choices and Challenges of Sustainable Development: What do the concepts, language, and implementation actually mean? And how do we know when we have got there?”
- Representatives from local government participated in a major conference held in Auckland on 20 May 2002 titled “Sustainability Series 2002”. This conference focused on partnerships for sustainability. The conference included an impressive lineup of international and national speakers. Bob Harvey spoke on behalf of local government in his capacity as Local Government New Zealand’s spokesperson for Sustainable Development.

- A set of project teams have been established to assist local government with the implementation of the Local Government Act. One project team will focus on “outcomes”. This group will begin the process of modelling up the outcomes that councils may seek to record in their Long Term Council Community Plans, as they promote the “wellbeing” of their communities. As such, the group will have a unique opportunity to turn the rhetoric of sustainable development into a “reality” for local government.
- The second annual conference on ‘Redesigning Resources’, was held in Christchurch on 8-9 July 2002. This year’s conference focused on refreshing understanding of sustainable development principles and reported on the progress made by a number of large companies in applying triple bottom line and sustainable development principles to their operations.

## ATTACHMENT TWO

### A New Zealand Local Government Declaration on Sustainable Development

#### Preamble

For over thirty years, the international community has been trying to reconcile the economic, social, cultural and ecological facets of development. The aim was, and remains, to move towards development that is sustainable in all these sectors. In particular, the needs of both present and future generations must be accounted for.

At the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED or the Rio Earth Summit), 178 Governments made a commitment to work towards a new and equitable global partnership. This would respect all humanity and protect the integrity of the global environment, while recognising the integral and interdependent nature of the Earth, our home. The 2002 United Nations World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), being held in Johannesburg, continues this process.

One of the sustainable development guidelines agreed to at the 1992 summit was Agenda 2 1. This remains as relevant today as it was then. We, the Local Government Sector of New Zealand, regard the sustainable development objectives and principles of the Agenda 21 Agreement as being critical to achieving the aims of both the 1992 and 2002 Summits. Therefore, we make the following declaration.

#### Declaration

**We support** the initiatives that various nations and communities have made towards Sustainable Development at local, national and international levels.

**We note** the continued preoccupation with economic issues at the expense of the earth's fragile ecosystems and peace and equity among peoples. Whilst confirming the essential role which economic activity plays in our lives, we seek to encourage the development of economic thinking and practices which acknowledge the scarcity and value of resources in both the production and consumption cycles.

**We believe** that the developed nations of the world must increase their resolve to share what resources they possess to help the poorer nations improve their standards of living. In this regard Local Government of New Zealand **joins together with other local governments of other nations** to achieve global economic, environmental, social and cultural equity and sustainability. We also support local activities that promote a more equitable sharing of resources.

**We endorse** the leadership role currently being taken by the New Zealand Government to introduce Sustainable Development thinking and actions throughout all sectors of New Zealand society.

**We recognise** that by becoming aware of the global consequences of what we do at both the local and national level, we in New Zealand can discover new and innovative ways of providing local

solutions for local issues, and at the same time contribute toward global sustainable development objectives.

### **Principles to Guide Action**

In furtherance of the above commitment and resolution, we, the Local Government of New Zealand, will seek to apply the following principles:

- a long term view and approach is necessary for wise planning and to leave the same or better opportunities that we have enjoyed, for our children;
- good governance is the basis of equitable systems and quality of life for all within our communities;
- prevention is considered preferable to cure as being more effective and less wasteful of resources;
- a healthy viable natural environment is the basis of community and economic health;
- working in partnership is more effective, efficient and more conducive to cooperative communities than working in isolation;
- participation from the grassroots up is essential for true democracy and for the long term implementation of programmes at the local level;
- leadership by example and initiative is a responsible role of governing bodies;
- the diversity of cultures is to be valued for the richness of experience, spirit, skills and perspective they bring to our communities;
- sharing of knowledge and technologies builds the capacity for all to take part in sustainable development;
- acting locally, in a manner which takes account of possible global consequences, is essential to global sustainable development in which we all have a responsibility;
- respecting and protecting the intrinsic values of our biodiversity and social heritage not only drives the maintenance and restoration of fundamental ecological processes, but also gives cultural and spiritual connection to where we live.

### **Achieving Success**

#### **Successful implementation of sustainable development will mean:**

- working at all levels to build and expedite a common vision of peaceful and equitable communities with quality of life and respect for all in an ecologically sustainable environment;

- working in partnership with Central government, communities and the private sector;
- developing working alliances at an international level;
- working for good and better governance;
- assuming a role at the local community level which involves a mixture of leadership, facilitation, encouragement and partnership;
- measuring progress through monitoring programmes that address economic, social, cultural and ecological issues;
- being accountable;
- finding new methods to share information and technology, as well as build capacity within communities;
- celebrating the successes and learning from our failures.

## **Commitment**

**Our resolve is to make a positive difference at a local, national and international level. We intend to do that through increasing our level of understanding about sustainable development and applying its principles, and through sharing with the future generations of the world what we have at our disposal today.**

**Committing** ourselves to a new way of thinking and a new way of behaviour is a deliberate act on our part. We see this as necessary because global and national monitoring continues to show a net decline in ecological health. However, we note that at a local level, there are growing numbers of cases where this is being halted or reversed. Therefore, we feel local government should recognise and support such trends.

When we consider how our global neighbours live within their home countries:- where many struggle to preserve their culture; where some face the threat of death daily; where we are paid in one week what many of our neighbours have to work in excess of a year to earn, and where food means the difference between life and death rather than a choice between dining out or eating at home, we begin to appreciate the concerns of those who strove so hard to bring together the nations of the world at the Earth Summit. We therefore see our pursuit of sustainable development as contributing to the solving of these global problems while helping to improve our local quality of life.

Signed for and on behalf of the Local Authorities of New Zealand<sup>3</sup>

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Basil Morrison  
President,  
Local Government New Zealand

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<sup>3</sup> This will not be signed until each local authority has resolved to approve the fixing of the President's signature to this document.