



The Northern Action Group Incorporated

Christmas Newsletter: December 2021

Dear Member/Supporter,

Donations

Right up front I want to give a special thanks again to those who have donated during the past year! NAG is all voluntary and does not ask for an annual membership fee so we rely on your generosity with donations to meet our costs of materials and basic services. This is the Season of Giving, so please spare a little for NAG while you are at it this year. Thanks to the Covid spend-up and supply shortages inflation means your donation will never be worth more than it is now!

– thank you again to our supporters!

Donations to NAGs Bank Account ASB WW **12 3095 0233547 00** **Comments** to northernactiongroup@gmail.com

now...read on....

Another.. Covid19 Year

It's that time of the year again and not a whole lot to report to you since our post-AGM newsletter in August.

I don't know about the rest of you but Zoom (and other video app) meetings just aren't quite that same as face-to-face encounters (where people can't just click you into silence – or click you away 😊). And lockdowns tend to sap your enthusiasm for things after a while... Sigh.

So, we have not progressed follow-ups to our AGM action points for you as we might – and hope to put that right next year!

Nonetheless we have continued our Billboard campaign thanks to volunteer support, and your committee has worked hard remotely to get NAGs viewpoints out there on:

- the RFT Rort;
- the disastrous 3 waters proposal; and
- our continued opposition to the Landfill proposal. I am a S274 party to the proceedings. Submissions will be provided from March and the hearings are

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scheduled for the middle for next year. The [Fight the Tip Save the Dome](#) Facebook page will keep you up to date.

Jane Harris has kindly tidied up our website so we can give prominence to the most recent issue NAG has to front up on! – currently 3 waters. Thank you Jane!

Items that we continue to advocate for, but have not progressed since, include:

- Localism
- Rodney subdivision boundary changes
- Recall elections

They were fully covered in the [last \(August\) Newsletter](#).

Following up from our AGM, we have still to get a face-to-face meeting with the Rodney Local Board (that is now expected to be in February) to remind them of our activities and seek better engagement with the Board's efforts to improve local governance and outcomes for Rodney.

Service Level Review

After 3 years of study and deliberation following the recommendations of the Local Government Commission, the Governing body has recognized the differences in service levels and the associated Asset Based Service allocation of funding across local board areas. They could not bring themselves to directly address the asset inequalities by budgeting for fair and equitable investment levels, but Rodney has received a slight benefit through a minor change in the formula used to allocate funds. Thanks are appropriate to our local board Chairman for his work on this in the relevant AC Working Group.

NAG's Role and Purpose

Some people have asked why NAG needs to continue since we have not been successful so far in creating a separate unitary authority for North Rodney, or in allowing Rodney citizens and ratepayers to have any say in their own governance.

The reality is that Rodney, and North Rodney in particular, continues to suffer from the abuse, by a representation majority in AC, of minority local board areas that persists under a centralised amalgamation structure. That means we must continue to be a voice for democratic representation by, and for, our local communities, and for a fair and equitable treatment that reflects District wants and needs based on local community representation and circumstances.

Despite their best efforts on our behalf, the current structure of Auckland Council (AC) does not give our councillor (one vote of 21) or our Rodney Local Board (one of 20) any ability to influence the direction of AC policy and the allocation of resources or AC's demands on

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ratepayers and service users for income. The bias in this structure renders the pleading of our representatives on behalf of Rodney as effective as Macbeth's view of life – "It is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing"

Rodney continues to be a cash cow, playground, and potential rubbish dump for the majority Auckland urban dwellers. Their representatives have no motivation other than their conscience to treat Rodney communities fairly or to recognize the rural and coastal settlement nature of our communities, the size of Rodney and its community spread that depends on good roads, and the importance of maintaining our District's clean environment and economic value into and through an era of continual development and progress.

Rodney, and North Rodney communities, need a unified non-political voice to speak to the interests of our communities, including Iwi, and our ratepayers, and to argue for better governance and a better and fairer deal than we have had so far.

We will continue to argue for our own autonomy and governance for our area, and for the right to choose what form that takes.

But while the power of decision lies with centralized majorities that act against local communities' interests under a pretense of consultation, we will continue to add our voice of support to the efforts of our MPs, our Councillor and our Local Board to get the investment in infrastructure the district needs to support balanced and sustainable growth.

We will argue against the unfair cross-subsidies that tax locals to pay for major city spending. We will argue against Government proposals that reduce local representation in decision-making about resource allocation that affects us. And we will argue for more localism and against centralization.

We recognize that for some basic things, like justice, the rule of law, education and defence, a national approach should benefit us all, and that good planning helps people make better decisions. But like Adam Smith, who is much misquoted as supporting only market systems, we believe that in most things, the collective outcome of many communities working locally for their own interests, and together as it suits them, produces better social outcomes than any communist or socialist form of centrally directed Government and control.

3 waters

NAG is arguing against this blatant ideological nationalization of Local Government water assets and service provision, that has all the hallmarks of the AC amalgamation for Rodney ratepayers and aims to benefit urban water users at the expense of rural and coastal communities in Rodney. (See our comments on [3 waters](#) on our [website](#)).

NAG has also joined the Water Users Group as a founding member to help oppose this proposal. Their website is now live – www.waterusers.org.nz. If you have any friends or family that you want to sign up to receive updates, please do so by sending them that link. This will ensure they are entered in to the database.

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Their Facebook Page is also now live. [Please head over to Facebook and give the page a like](#) . Anyone signed up will start receiving WUG regular updates.

Billboard campaign

This continues, and with your support we are currently drawing attention to the misrepresentation (lies) in the Government's support campaign for the 3 waters proposal.

AC's Regional Fuel Tax (RFT) rort continues to deny Rodney's roads!

The AC 2020/2021 Annual report shows that AC continues to use Regional Fuel Tax (RFT) funds to fund other Council activities (or reduce their borrowing costs) - while Rodney roads continue to suffer.

Our Councillor called them out last year, but the rort [using RFT Reserves to fund other Council activities (or reduce funding costs)] continues - while Rodney roads suffer....

The balance in the Reserve has now swollen to \$255m!

	Actual 2020/21	Actual 2019/20	Actual 2018/19
	\$M	\$M	\$M
Regional Fuel Tax Reserve (D6)			
Opening Balance	132	67	0
Transfers in	154	144	156
Transfers out	-31	-79	-89
Closing Balance	255	132	67

The balance in the RFT Reserve (RFT monies paid to AC by NZTA) has now swollen to \$255m! since its inception in 2018. Over 3 years AC has received \$454m, but only paid out \$199m towards its RFT projects. While AC records the money received and used for RFT projects in a Reserve (now \$255m), unlike other targeted funds, it does not have to credit the RFT Reserve for interest on money not spent on RFT projects - so the cash is not held in Trust and is used elsewhere in AC to support its other spending - or offset its need to borrow. Each year AC has spent less of the RFT monies it receives on RFT project purposes. Just to remind you, these include improving roads.

This money could have been spent on Rodney's roads, but AC has other priorities..

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To rub salt in Rodney's wounds, (rather than seal on the roads) AC has also been funded by Government for its shovel ready projects. At least \$14m of that was for projects earmarked for RFT funding - and for which AC already had the money! Getting funding for transport projects from Government is great, but since they had RFT funding anyway, why did AC not chose additional non-RFT works for that shovel ready funding - like Rodney's roads? In the end no more work was done than AC intended anyway and they just pocketed the shovel ready funding for other spending....

Where is the accountability?

Have a Merry Xmas and lets all look forward to a very Happy New Year for 2022!

Yours sincerely

Bill Foster
Chairman
Northern Action Group Inc.

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