

**Views of the Rural Advisory Panel on the Long Term Plan / Auckland Plan Refresh  
to the Finance and Performance / Planning Joint Committee**  
**21 March 2018**

**Introduction**

The Rural Advisory Panel comprises 21 members including councillors, local board and Independent Maori Statutory Board members, together with pastoral, equine, forestry and horticultural interests, rural contractor and quarry operators, representatives of rural property owners and rural women.

Panel members have taken an active interest in providing comments throughout 2017 on staff presentations covering early drafts of the Auckland Plan Refresh and the Long Term Plan, and generally support the direction of these documents.

**Draft Long Term Plan and Budget 2018 – 28**

(1) Proposed Regional Fuel Tax.

We agree in principle with the regional fuel tax proposal of 10 cents + GST per litre. Efficient transport routes are essential to ensure rural production, often perishable, can get to processing facilities or market.

Two issues arise:-

- How will the administration of the proposed fuel tax deal with claims for the recovery of off road use of petrol and diesel? Note that a similar arrangement will need to be made for the fishing industry. The tax should be aimed at the activities causing the congestion effect (primarily private motor vehicles).
- We would also like to be consulted on the list of transport projects funded by a regional fuel tax to ensure that rural roading projects are included.

(2) Cleaning up our harbours, beaches and streams.

We are pleased to see Auckland's water quality challenge being acknowledged and addressed as both an urban and rural issue. Urban activity is the primary source of contaminants entering water resources in Auckland and continuing urban growth will lead to a further degradation in water quality. We therefore support the proposal although we consider that it should be levied on a flat rate rather than as a targeted rate based on property value, because all residents and ratepayers - whether rural or urban - benefit equally from cleaner water.

We note that many in the rural sector have been carrying out riparian and catchment management programmes as individuals, community and sector groups for many years at their own cost.

(3) Protecting endangered species.

Biosecurity is a significant rural issue, not just for protecting endangered species (eg. Kauri) but also to ensure high quality farming production, it is important to control animal and plant pests such as possums and woolly nightshade. We therefore

support Option B as the higher level of the proposed targeted rate, although we consider that it should be levied on a flat rate rather than as a targeted rate based on property value because all residents and ratepayers benefit equally.

We consider that the 500 metre weed buffer control adjacent to Council parkland needs to be extended to private to private land boundaries, so there is a consistent approach to all land. The category 'private rural land' covers the greatest part of Auckland.

The Council also needs to ensure that there are sufficient monitoring and enforcement resources, so that additional measures are implemented. Sustained control seems to be the default setting for the majority of the weeds and pests; if we really want to get rid of our tag as the weediest city, we need greater resources to work with landowners and communities.

#### (4) Rates.

Having compared rate increases at other councils, the Panel supports the proposed 2.5% and 3.5% rates increases but still requests that Council looks to reduce its costs where possible. We therefore support the disestablishment of Auckland Council Investments Limited as a means of saving money.

### **Draft Auckland Plan 2050**

The Panel's views on this document largely relate to its rural interests. However we agree with the three key challenges facing Auckland and are willing to help in addressing them.

In particular, the Panel supports the following outcomes:

#### (1) Transport and Access

Direction 1 – Create an integrated transport system connecting people, places, goods and services, particularly Focus areas 5, 6, and 7.

#### (2) Environment and Cultural Heritage

Direction 1 – Ensure the environment is valued and cared for. While we support the objective of protecting the natural environment, we note that rural production zones are working environments which have been modified and are not natural. However they are still managed by the objectives, policies and rules of the Unitary Plan.

Direction 4 – Ensure Auckland's infrastructure is future-proofed in regard to Focus Area 5. Adapt to a changing water future. The Panel is keen to ensure that a region wide water demand and supply strategy is developed which covers water resources, storage and harvesting, and considers the need for food security and effects of climate change to ensure high quality water supply year round that supports on going irrigation, cultivation and food production in Auckland.

#### (3) Development Strategy

The Development Strategy describes four main ways that Auckland will grow and change in the next 30 years. The Rural Advisory Panel is particularly interested in 4: we will limit growth in rural areas.

The Panel strongly supports this approach which is similar to the direction taken in the existing Auckland Plan. While the Unitary Plan has specific planning provisions relating to this, it is important for the Auckland Plan to continue to set out the

overarching strategy.

We note that in this context, 'growth' appears to relate to population or residential growth. However we are strongly in support of sustainable growth in rural food production or processing facilities where possible. For example, the kiwifruit sector has identified that Auckland is a significant focus area for growth with ambitions to quadruple the volume in Auckland in 30 years (Franklin Future Water Demand Strategy; prepared for Auckland Council and Horticulture NZ; 2014) . We therefore suggest that the last sentence on page 27 of the Draft Auckland Plan 2050 Overview should read:

To ensure that rural production can continue **and develop**, land fragmentation and reverse sensitivity (within the rural environment and at the rural urban boundary) must be managed to safeguard elite and prime soils, and support the resources and production systems that underpin working on rural land. Resources required for rural production activities (including water) must be available for these activities and not compromised by inappropriate subdivision, use and development.

### **Conclusion**

The Panel appreciates this opportunity to make comments.