

6. QUALITY OF LIFE IN NEW ZEALAND'S SIX LARGEST CITIES - REPORT LAUNCH AND NEXT STEPS

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The purpose of this report is to advise the Committee of the outcomes from the release of the first results from the National Quality of Life Indicators project, the initial response from Central Government, and to outline the next steps for the indicators project. These include discussions with Central Government on collaboration opportunities and options for further joint six city projects to progress the issues raised in the report.

BACKGROUND

The inaugural report on "Quality of Life in New Zealand's Six Largest Cities" was launched at a meeting of the Prime Minister and Mayors from the six cities at the Beehive on 20 June 2001. A copy has been sent to all Councillors. This report arose from the National Indicators project started in 1999 by the Chief Executives of the six largest cities (Auckland, Christchurch, Manukau, North Shore, Waitakere and Wellington) in response to the growing pressures on urban communities, concern about the impact of urbanisation and the effect of this on the well-being of citizens. The project began as an initiative to jointly monitor changing social conditions in New Zealand's largest cities and later grew to include a broader range of social and economic indicators to encompass a broader "quality of life" focus. It was seen that a co-operative six-city approach to monitoring would enable participating councils to develop a consistent set of "large city indicators", identify city trends and provide a platform to develop holistic responses, along with Central Government, to emerging issues.

To date, the project has had four general steps:

- Identifying possible indicators.
- Purchasing data and analysing key results and trends.
- Writing the report.
- Launching the report.

An outline on the indicators selected to monitor quality of life was presented at the October 2000 meeting of the Strategy and Resources Committee. A briefing session for elected members on key findings from the Quality of Life Report was held on 20 February 2001. The key findings in the report cover the areas of:

- Demographics
- Housing
- Health
- Education
- Employment and Economy
- Safety
- Urban Environment
- Community Cohesion
- Democracy

REPORT LAUNCH ON 20 JUNE

A joint public launch of the "Quality of Life in New Zealand's Six Largest Cities Report" was held on 20 June at the Beehive in Wellington. This was hosted by the Prime Minister and attended by Mayors (with Councillor Penny Sefuiva representing Auckland Mayor, Christine Fletcher), Council Chief Executives, invited Cabinet Ministers and several Ministerial Chief Executives. The meeting provided an opportunity for the Mayors to make a submission to the Prime Minister on the need for central and local government to work more closely, both on the issues highlighted in the Quality of Life Report and on ongoing city monitoring. Key requests made by the Mayors included:

- Central Government and the six cities jointly publishing the second "Quality of Life in New Zealand's Six Largest Cities" Report in early in 2003.
- Establishing a joint Central Government/Six Cities working party to explore collaboration opportunities which would progress the key issues raised in the report.
- Reviewing progress of the working party through a follow-up Six Cities/Prime Ministerial meeting to be held before 31 March 2002.

OUTCOMES FROM THE LAUNCH

Both the Prime Minister, the Rt Hon Helen Clark, and the Minister for Local Government, the Hon Sandra Lee, responded to the Mayoral submission. Both congratulated the six cities for their initiative and for the work undertaken in amassing the most comprehensive picture to date of life in New Zealand's six largest cities.

The Prime Minister noted the proposed changes to the Local Government Act as a key means through which councils will be given the power to determine their own future. The Minister of Local Government also made reference to the synergies between the Quality of Life initiative and the intent of the new local government legislation.

Hon Sandra Lee noted the partnership intent of the new legislation and that the new Act recognised the joint roles and responsibilities of Government to people. She signalled the time had come to stop fighting about whose fault it was and whose role it was to fix problems and welcomed the six cities' approach to work together on key issues of concern.

In terms of a direct response to the Central Government/Six Cities working party request, the Prime Minister advised that she would have to give some thought as to who was best to convene the working party. It is understood that this role could be undertaken by one of a range of government departments (e.g. Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, State Services Commission). Discussions would take place over the next month to establish where the responsibility for the convening role would lie.

NEXT STEPS FOR THE QUALITY OF LIFE INDICATORS PROJECT

Key Issues for Action Identified

Collectively, the Auckland, Christchurch, Manukau, North Shore, Waitakere and Wellington cities account for 40% of New Zealand's population. As noted above, many potential areas for further action have been identified through the production of the Quality of Life Report. It is suggested that there be collaboration between the six cities and with Central Government to deal with some of these issues, in particular on the matters of:

- Population growth and poverty pockets in the Auckland Region.
- Unemployment.
- Crowded households and housing affordability and quality.
- Immigrant and refugee health, and the underlying determinants of health.
- School leavers with no qualifications.
- Recreation for youth.
- Risk to children and youth.
- Public transport issues and air, water, noise and graffiti pollution.
- Support for volunteers and community organisations.
- Willingness to stand for election by non-European citizens and voter turnout at elections.
- Indicator selection, data collection, perception surveys and outcome measurement.

Collaboration Initiatives

It must be recognised that there are already many different types of Local/Central Government collaboration under way. Many of these encompass the suggested areas for follow-up noted above (e.g. Mayors for Jobs and Unemployment). In addition, Central Government, too, is undertaking many related policy initiatives and projects (e.g. Children's Policy and Youth Development Strategy, Community and Voluntary Sector Working Party, production of a national "Social Report").

There are a number of possible future joint projects between Local and Central Government which can build on the Quality of Life Indicators Report and be co-ordinated with these existing initiatives. It is envisaged that the proposed Central Government/Six Cities working party will explore a range of ways through which greater collaboration and co-ordination could take place. This would be both in terms of promoting best practice initiatives and finding new ways to close the gap between territorial local authority and central government policies, programmes and monitoring frameworks.

Whilst actual representation, resourcing requirements and a terms of reference for the proposed working party have yet to be determined, guidance is sought from the six participating councils on priority areas for follow-up six cities action.

SUMMARY NEXT STEPS FOR QUALITY OF LIFE INDICATORS PROJECT

2001 Report Follow Up

- Identification of priorities for Central Government/six cities collaboration by each individual council.
- Priorities and new ideas from councils brought together.
- Establishment of Central Government agencies on issues of data availability, collection, cost, etc as experienced in the production of the 2001 "Quality of Life in New Zealand's Six Largest Cities Report".
- Establishment of joint Six Cities/Central Government project teams to progress specific issues raised in the report.

2001 Report Communication

- On-going circulation of the report and discussions on key findings with a range of local, regional and national stakeholders.
- Launch of six cities website for the Quality of Life Indicators Project.

Report Updating

- On-going development of an annual six cities survey framework.
- Updating of the 2001 Report in 2002 (with new census information, etc).
- Work towards second full Quality of Life Indicators Report for 2003.

CONCLUSION

The Quality of Life Report makes an important contribution to understanding the social, economic and environmental conditions within large New Zealand cities and has highlighted areas of common concern. The Prime Ministerial launch of the report has provided an excellent promotional vehicle for the report and marks the beginning of an on-going co-operative approach between New Zealand's six largest cities and Central Government to deal with those issues identified in the report and quality of life monitoring in general. Progress on joint six cities/Central Government collaboration, including the establishment of a Six Cities/Central Government working party will be reported back to the Council over the next few months.

Recommendation: That the information be received and that the Committee endorse the establishment of a Six Cities/Central Government working party to review and progress issues raised in the inaugural "Quality of Life in New Zealand's Six Largest Cities" Report.

Chairman's

Recommendation: That the above recommendation be adopted.