

LOCAL GOVERNMENT FORUM

**Media Release
12 June 2012**

Local Government Forum Welcomes New Reform Bill

The Local Government Forum has welcomed the Local Government Act Amendment Bill and looks forward to submitting on it.

“This proposed legislation will help councils focus on areas that matter and should relieve the heavy burden on ratepayers,” said Michael Barnett, Chair of the Local Government Forum.

“Over the last ten years local government spending and rates have doubled. This blow-out is evidence that councils need greater clarity on their roles and responsibilities,” said Mr Barnett.

“Since 2002 the Local Government Act has required councils to actively promote social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being. This has helped generate extravagant public expectations of what councils should be doing and has made it hard for councils to say ‘no’.

“This Bill aims to close this chapter by requiring councils to be more prudent and focussed in terms of their activities.

“There are some areas however where we doubt if the Bill goes far enough and we will likely be recommending it be tightened up in places.

“The legislation will also streamline the local government reorganisation processes.

“Many communities around the country will welcome the proposals to speed up and make more likely amalgamation of councils in a given area. Bigger is not necessarily better but there are likely to be areas where better decision making results and it is good to see the spur that the government’s action has already had with some councils.

“The Local Government Forum looks forward to submitting on the Bill and seeing an improved operating framework for Local Government in New Zealand,” Mr Barnett concluded.

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ABOUT THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT FORUM

The Local Government Forum comprises organisations that have a vital interest in the activities of local government. Its members include the New Zealand Initiative, the Electricity Networks Association, Federated Farmers of New Zealand, New Zealand Business Roundtable, New Zealand Chambers of Commerce, and New Zealand Retailers' Association. The Forum was established in 1994 to promote greater efficiency in local government and to contribute to debate on policy issues affecting it.

Forum members are each significant representatives of ratepayers in their own right but the Forum's perspective is to advance community welfare through the advocacy of sound public policy. We believe that local government can best serve the interests of the community and ratepayers by focusing on the efficient provision of public goods at a local level.