



## LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION

### **Media Release**

**8 December 2005**

#### **GRANT KIRBY RETIRES FROM COMMISSION**

The Chairman of the Local Government Commission, Grant Kirby, advised that he will be stepping down from that role from today. His term had ended on 30 June 2005 but he had agreed to a request from the previous Minister of Local Government, Hon Chris Carter, to stay on as Chairman until after the Parliamentary election and until outstanding issues, such as the proposal for the inclusion of Banks Peninsula District in Christchurch City, had been dealt with.

Mr Kirby said that he looked back on his time as Chair of the Commission with some satisfaction, in particular its recent decision on Banks Peninsula District. The Commission's decision that Banks Peninsula District be included in Christchurch City was endorsed recently by a poll of Banks Peninsula District electors.

"The conclusion of the Banks Peninsula issue marked a good time to step down" said Mr Kirby. "It would also give the full complement of new Commissioners sufficient time to prepare for the next round of representation reviews in 2006 and 2007".

Mr Kirby said there were some matters of concern to him that had come to the fore during his four and a half years in the position. These were -

- The fragmentation of local government in the Auckland Region: He said that governance by 7 territorial authorities and 1 regional council caused conflicting messages to be given about Auckland priorities. It also resulted in over \$1 billion collected annually by the 8 councils being used for local instead of Auckland-wide priorities. Better regional use of the money collected could benefit all Aucklanders and boost Auckland's contribution to the national economic performance.
- The difficulty that some smaller local authorities are experiencing in meeting their financial and statutory requirements: He said that unless sensible amalgamations were successfully promoted he thought it likely

that central government would face increasing requests for assistance from some local authorities.

- The requirement in the Local Government Act for a majority of electors in each affected district to agree to an amalgamation proposal: He said that in most cases this requirement prevented the sensible reorganisation of local government. Mr Kirby said that a good example was the proposal to amalgamate Napier City and Hastings District in 1999 when Hastings electors supported the proposal in a poll while Napier electors opposed it.

He said that these were issues the Government and the new Commission would need to deal with in the future.

Mr Kirby thanked Linda Constable and Kerry Marshall, the two other members of the Commission he had worked with during most of his term of office, for their clear focus and support over some difficult issues. He also thanked the Commission's staff for their advice and support, in particular Chief Executive Officer, Donald Riezebos, and Senior Advisor, Francis Ryan who had served the Commission through his term.

"I wish the new members of the Commission well for the challenges facing them over the next three years" Mr Kirby said.