

# **COLUMN FROM MAYOR TIM SHADBOLT**

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## **THE HOTSEAT**

I believe the time has come to stop persecuting MP's over their perks. They've been caught. Most like Bill English will roll over and pay back the money, so let's get on with running the country. Details of MP's pay are now going to be revealed every three months so the moral outrage will never stop. The only people we'll attract to Parliament will be stay at home, sanctimonious nerds who live off half a cup of raisins a day and travel on bicycles. I wouldn't mind a high level of transparency if all areas of government and local government were exposed so we could put the whole issue in perspective.

This week we've had a visit by Rodney Hide and I really enjoyed his passionate, forthright and highly entertaining comments on local government. He confided in me the salaries of the members of the Auckland Transition Agency. They made my eyes water. I can't reveal the figures because of the privacy laws which don't seem to apply to MP's. Let's just say that all of Bill English's accommodation allowances for the next 40 years would be more than that covered by one week's pay for agency members. If only we could hear about the perks for senior bureaucrats and CEO's through New Zealand.

The Auckland Transition Agency members are not the brightest cookies in the jar. Their mission is to bring unity to Auckland, but already the Chairman, Mark Ford, has had a public brawl with the CEO, Mr Kerr-Newell who was then demoted to 'senior advisor'. Chairman Ford has now decided he will take the role of CEO for himself. Now the Franklin Council has accused the Auckland Transition Agency of bullying as the agency refuses to approve their Long Term Council Community Plan unless they include \$223,487 for the Rugby World Cup. Franklin's 65,000 residents strongly oppose this departure from core services.

At present Auckland has all the hallmarks of a very sick puppy. Now poisoned birds, fish and seals are washing up on Auckland's beaches and killing dogs. The main culprit is now considered to be cow dung. Every week the equivalent of 32 truckloads of nitrogen rich urea fertiliser is poured into the Firth of Thames as a result of intensive farming. The region's dairy cattle produce the same amount of faecal bacteria as 15 million people, or 117 cities the size of Hamilton.

Once amalgamated Auckland will become the largest rural Council in New Zealand, as well as the largest urban Council. It's rapidly becoming renamed New Zealand's 'Super Shity' and swimming, fishing or walking your dog is now banned from most of the region's beaches.

However there is one aspect of Auckland I really admire and that is their reaction to our Auckland Island pigs. Every week there is a major article in the New Zealand Herald on their progress. They seem to recognise the enormity of this exciting new industry. The latest story is about the 300 diabetic patients from all over the world who are pleading to be used as human guinea pigs for the trials that are about to take place at Middlemore Hospital.

Aucklanders clearly recognise the potential of this medical breakthrough and recently invested \$6 million for further research. Invercargill has invested nothing. Sometimes I believe we suffer from an inferiority complex when it comes to science and academic research. We know we are good at sport and we invest heavily in netball stadiums, velodromes, hockey turfs and Rugby Park. However we don't believe it's possible that we are intellectual giants when it comes to leading edge medical research.

When you look at our wall of fame at the Airport there are no scientists. We shouldn't hesitate for one moment in accepting the fact that we are absolutely brilliant. Just because every major university in the world has failed to cure a major epidemic, that doesn't mean Invercargill can't do it. We are an incredibly intelligent community. We must have faith in our brains, as well as our physical prowess.