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Accepting a new commission

As some readers may be aware, I have recently been appointed by the government to the Local Government Commission for three years from 1st August 2015

I am privileged to be appointed alongside Sir Wira Gardiner, who is the new Chair, and Janie Annear who has been reappointed for the full three-year term. Sir Wira has had a distinguished public service career, while Janie is a former long-serving Mayor of the Timaru District Council. My background is with the executive of local government, and more latterly within broader governance.

I pay tribute to the outgoing members of the commission, and in particular the Chair Basil Morrison. Basil has been a wonderful servant and leader of local government in New Zealand and internationally. Like many that have had an association with Basil, I have always appreciated his wit, charm and intellect.

It is not my intention to discuss the direction of the Local Government Commission. This is more appropriate from the Chair on behalf of the commission, and for the Minister of Local Government, Hon Paula Bennett in terms of broader central gov-



Basil Morrison



Janie Annear



Sir Wira Gardiner

the commission, to provide a snapshot of the commission's work.

The commission is resourced by a division of the Department of Internal Affairs. The division has a Chief Executive Officer, Sandra Preston, with a resource comprised of a number of policy analysts and administrators.

Reorganisation organisation

The Local Government Commission is an independent statutory body established

boards and the governing body of a unitary authority about the allocation of decision-making responsibility and proposed bylaws.

The Chair of the Local Government Commission is also a non-voting member of the Representation Commission under the Electoral Act 1993.

The commission also undertakes other duties in respect of licensing trusts and ad hoc duties such as reviews on the operation of the Local Government Act.

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ernment vision and strategy for the sector.

Readers may, however, wish to read a recent speech by the Minister to the Local Government Conference in Rotorua which gives a fairly clear message from her as to the government's aspirations for the sector. These aspirations have particular relevance to the infrastructural industry. The speech can be accessed at <http://tinyurl.com/pl9m68m> and I recommend it. More recently the Chair of the commission, Sir Wira Gardiner has amplified on the minister's speech, and his statement can be found on the Local Government Commission website.

I thought it might useful for the reader, within the context of local government organisation and the 'day-to-day' activities of

under the Local Government Act 2002. The commission was first established in 1947 to consider proposals for local government reorganisation. Reorganisation is a core function of the commission, although the rules under which reorganisation takes place have changed over time.

Likewise, over this period, dealing with local authority representation arrangements has become a core function of the commission.

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It also has a role in disputes between local

The reader will be aware of a number of high profile amalgamation issues in Northland, Wellington and the Hawkes Bay.

It is not my intention to comment on these, other than to note that the commission has an ongoing role in working with local government in these areas on the issues behind the initial proposals. In the Hawkes Bay, we all await the outcome of a poll being undertaken in the area on a reorganisation proposal.

For someone who has been closely involved in local government for around 40 years, the opportunity to serve on the Local Government Commission is an honour. I look forward to the role, working with and alongside local government which has such a critical role in the wellbeing of our society.