

LOCAL GOVERNMENT FORUM

25 February 2014

'BUSINESS FRIENDLY COUNCILS' WELCOMED

The Local Government Forum has today welcomed the release of Local Government New Zealand's *Business Friendly Councils* guidelines and case studies.

"The performance of local government is critically important to business success," said Michael Barnett, Chair of the Local Government Forum.

"The business community is heavily reliant on effective and efficient delivery of infrastructure, services, and regulation that reduces the barriers and costs to commercial activity and stimulates local business growth and of course jobs.

"So it's great that the local government sector is publicly committing to better understanding the importance of business and the need to become more business friendly.

"The six principles in *Business Friendly Councils* are high level and process-oriented, and much will depend on how they are implemented. However, the principles are a useful starting point for any council wanting to better engage with business and they'll also be useful for the business community in holding councils to account for their performance.

"Although the report is focused on our bigger cities the principles are relevant for all councils.

"A missing element is funding and rates. I suspect that many businesses would have welcomed a more explicit commitment to a reduced and more equitable rating burden, including sticking to core functions. Similarly, councils need to understand when to step back and leave well alone, even when some businesses lobby them for special treatment.

"It's also important that central government lifts its game as it passes most of the legislation and regulation that councils have to administer and it also provides funding, such as its contribution for local roads.

"I am hopeful that councils will live up to these principles and do their bit to help build a better business environment, which means more jobs and higher incomes for all New Zealanders" said Mr Barnett.

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ABOUT THE FORUM

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

For more information on the Forum, see www.localgovtforum.org.nz