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Auckland Airport's Underhand Tactics

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Press Release: Waitakere City

April 27, 2007

Media Release (For Immediate Release)

Auckland Airport's Underhand Tactics

Waitakere Mayor Bob Harvey is "staggered" by revelations that Auckland International Airport has been secretly funding a fight against an alternative airport at Whenuapai.

The North ShoreTimes has revealed that in the past year AIAL has given \$19,000 in cash and an unspecified amount of research time and other material to the Whenuapai Airport Action Group, a small ginger group opposed to plans for commercial flights out of the existing airforce base.

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“We have long suspected that WAAG was being funded by foul means rather than fair. And our suspicions have been confirmed.

“AIAL is the business equivalent of the Exclusive Brethren,” says Mayor Harvey, referring to the religious sect’s secret campaign to support the National Party at the last election.

“Here we have a major listed New Zealand company hiding behind a supposed community group, acting out of total self interest, and trying to keep it all secret.”

Mayor Harvey adds that he cannot believe the chairman or the board members of Auckland International Airport would have known about or condoned the “underhanded” campaign.

He says his Council and newly formed NorthWest Airport Company (a consortium of Waitakere, North Shore and Rodney councils and listed infrastructure company Infratil) is now taking legal advice and considering a complaint to the Commerce Commission.

“AIAL has clearly been working in an anti-competitive way to undermine our project and protect their monopoly. For all we know \$19,000 is just the tip of the ice-berg. Besides, it’s not the amount of money that is the issue- this is a matter of business ethics, or rather lack of them.”

Mayor Harvey says that Auckland Airport is entitled to state its point of view about the prospects for a second airport in the region, but it should do honestly and openly, not try to influence outcomes in this underhand way.

“Then the public could judge for themselves the extent to which the company is trying to defend its gold plated monopoly or how much it is really concerned with the public good.”

Mr Harvey says that many members of WAAG are probably not even aware of the secret deal. “That organisation is also tainted by this. It calls into question how much of the WAAG support has been engineered by a public relations campaign, and who paid for that campaign. It calls into question who supplied much of the misleading information WAAG has been spreading. Is WAAG, in fact, just a creature of Auckland International Airport?”

“AIAL knows there is strong support for commercial flights at Whenuapai from the general public and business in Rodney, North Shore and Waitakere. Perhaps that is why they prefer campaigning in this underground manner.”

Mr Harvey is also going to raise his concerns to his mayoral counterparts in Auckland and Manukau.

“I am sure Auckland City Council and Manukau City Council will be horrified by revelations that a company in which they are substantial shareholders is attempting to manipulate things, and torpedo a company owned by three other Councils which is attempting to create value for its ratepayers. I know that’s not the way Mayor Hubbard and Sir Barry (Curtis) do business.”

Ends

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