

*Joint media release from the Councils of North Shore, Waitakere, Auckland, Manukau, Rodney, Hamilton, Tauranga, Wellington, Hutt, Porirua, Christchurch and Dunedin.*

**EMBARGOED until the official release of the Quality of Life report, 1pm, Tuesday, November 27, 2007**

## **QUALITY OF LIFE REPORT 2007: RODNEY MEDIA RELEASE**

Rodney residents are the most contented in the country and the district's economy is among the best performing, according to a new report.

The 2007 Quality of Life report, released by the Metropolitan Sector Group today, provides a comprehensive assessment of the quality of life in 12 New Zealand cities, as part of a multi-council initiative.

The report showed 93% of Rodney residents rated their quality of life as either good or extremely good – the highest rating in the report. The average for all 12 cities was 90%.

In addition, 92% rate themselves as happy or very happy – also the highest among the 12 cities. And Rodney residents were the least likely to say they'd experienced negative stress.

The report also had positive findings about Rodney's economy:

- GDP growth averaged 5.8% for the years 2001-2006 – the second-highest rate of economic growth among the 12 cities.
- The number of jobs in the city increased by 32.9% over the period 2001-2006 – the second-highest rate of employment growth among the 12 cities.
- Of people aged over 15 years at the 2006 Census, 3.4% were unemployed – the lowest among the 12 cities.
- Over the period 2002-2006, the number of economically viable business enterprises increased by 40.3% – well above the national average of 26.3%, and the highest increase among the 12 cities.
- Median household income increased by 38.2% between 2001 and 2006 – the highest of the 12 cities.

“Any way you look at it, these are positive results for Rodney,” said Mayor Penny Webster. “What we're seeing is a district that's booming – with rapid economic growth, a very high quality of life, increasing prosperity, and a dynamic, growing population.”

The report also pointed to challenges facing the district. These included protecting biodiversity and the coastal environment from the effects of development, and improving road safety and transport options.

“It also has to be acknowledged that there are still areas, such as consents processing, in which we as a council must do better. We recognise that, and we are working very hard to improve those.”

Mrs Webster said it was important to note that Rodney district was the only district included in the Quality of Life Report – all the others were city councils.

“We are obviously punching well above our weight,” she says.

Other key results included:

- Rodney was the country’s fastest-growing city during the years 2001-2006, with a 17.6% increase in population. Rodney is projected to continue as the fastest-growing city, with a further 58.6% increase in population over the period 2006-2026.
- Though the rate of home ownership declined between 2001 and 2006, it remained higher than any other city.
- 63% of Rodney residents undertake physical activity five or more times a week – the highest rate among the 12 cities.
- Among all 12 cities, Rodney residents were the most likely to say they’d had positive contact with their neighbours.

The Quality of Life project started with six councils in 1999 and has since expanded to 12 territorial local authorities, including: Rodney; North Shore; Waitakere; Auckland; Manukau; Hamilton; Tauranga; Porirua; Hutt; Wellington; Christchurch; and Dunedin.

The project aims to give decision-makers information to help them improve the quality of life in major New Zealand urban areas.

Project sponsor Jim Harland said the report highlighted the need for action to plan for long-term growth, improve access to services and promote economic and environmental sustainability.

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