

EMBARGOED UNTIL THE OFFICIAL RELEASE OF THE QUALITY OF LIFE REPORT, 1PM, TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 27, 2007

QUALITY OF LIFE REPORT 2007: WELLINGTON, PORIRUA AND HUTT CITIES MEDIA RELEASE

The Wellington region offers its residents a very high quality of life – but faces some challenges in achieving sustainable economic development and providing affordable housing for residents, according to a national report out today.

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.

In all three Wellington cities covered in the report, the vast majority of residents rated their quality of life as good or extremely good (92% for Wellington, 92% for Porirua and 89% for Hutt City).

In all three cities, 90% of residents rated themselves happy or very happy, and in all three residents rated themselves satisfied or very satisfied with their lives (90% for Porirua, 89% for Hutt City and 88% for Wellington).

“These results show all three cities are great places to live,” said Wellington Mayor Kerry Prendergast.

“While there are some challenges, such as achieving higher rates of growth, we’re working together through the Wellington Regional Strategy to address those,” said Hutt City Mayor David Ogden.

“Overall, this report shows the region offers outstanding quality of life,” said Porirua Mayor Jenny Brash.

Other key results from the report included:

Population and community:

- The report showed Wellington city’s population grew by 9.5% during the period 2001 to 2006. Growth was slower in Porirua (2.5%) and Hutt City (2.4%). Over the period from 2006-26, the region is expected to grow, but at a slower rate than the national average.
- All three cities were becoming more culturally diverse, and a clear majority in all three cities believed increased diversity made their cities a better place to live.
- Residents in Porirua and Hutt City were the most likely among all 12 cities to feel a strong sense of community in their local neighbourhoods. A clear majority of Wellington city residents also felt a strong sense of community. The vast majority

of residents in all three cities had positive contact with their neighbours, and felt they could trust people around them.

Economy:

- Over the period 2001 to 2006, Porirua recorded annual economic growth per capita of 6.0%, the highest of the 12 cities. Hutt City recorded annual per capita growth of 2.4% and Wellington recorded annual per capita growth of 2.2%. The national average for the period was 2.1%.
- All three cities recorded improvements in labour productivity over the period 2001-06, while nationwide there was a decline. Improvements in labour productivity are important for sustainable long-term economic growth.
- All three cities recorded job growth over the 2001-06 period, and all three had labour force participation rates above the national average.

Environment:

- Very few residents in the three cities regarded air pollution as a problem, and less than half rated water pollution as a problem. The Wellington region's ecological footprint was better than the national average.
- 82% of Wellington city residents felt pride in the look and feel of their city – the highest result by far among the 12 cities. A majority of Porirua and Hutt City residents also felt pride in the look and feel of their cities.
- Wellington region residents are far more likely to use public transport and less likely to own cars than residents in other parts of the country: 51% of Wellington residents, 37% of Hutt residents and 35% of Porirua residents used public transport at least once a week – these were the three highest results among the 12 cities. About 65% of Porirua residents and 50% of Hutt residents travelled outside their home cities to work – Porirua's was the highest rate among any of the 12 cities. Wellington and Hutt households had the lowest levels of motor vehicle ownership among the 12 cities, and Porirua's rate of motor vehicle ownership was third lowest, equal with four other cities.

Housing:

- In all three cities, the rate of home ownership has declined since 2001. In Wellington and Porirua, the rate of home ownership was below the national average.
- In all three cities, the median house sale price increased substantially between 2001 and 2006, (64.0% in Wellington, 64.6% in Porirua and 67.6% in Hutt City).
- In Wellington and Hutt City, rents became more affordable over this period (i.e. rents declined as a proportion of income).

Nationwide, household debt increased by 73.6% during the period December 2002 to December 2006 (from \$85,806 million to \$148,920 million). Most of that increase was mortgage debt.

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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