

Politics

Auckland MPs hard to hear

by Tamara Walker

Auckland City may have been a winner in this year's budget, but an injection of money does not guarantee the CBD a bright future.

Despite almost \$560 million being put into Auckland's transport over the next year — \$8 billion over the next decade — it is uncertain whether central Auckland will be getting what it needs.

According to opposition politicians, central Auckland's voice in Parliament is poor.

With about 73,000 people entering the CBD each weekday morning — 60 per cent of them by car, the Government acknowledges transport as one of the biggest issues in central Auckland.

Auckland Issues Minister Judith Tizard says the Government is working for Auckland and "delivering on our promise to get Auckland moving".

But some politicians feel a lack communication will hold back further developments.

Max Calder-Watson, a spokesperson for Green MPs Keith Locke and Sue Bradford, says 85 per cent of central Aucklanders support more money going into public transport than roads.

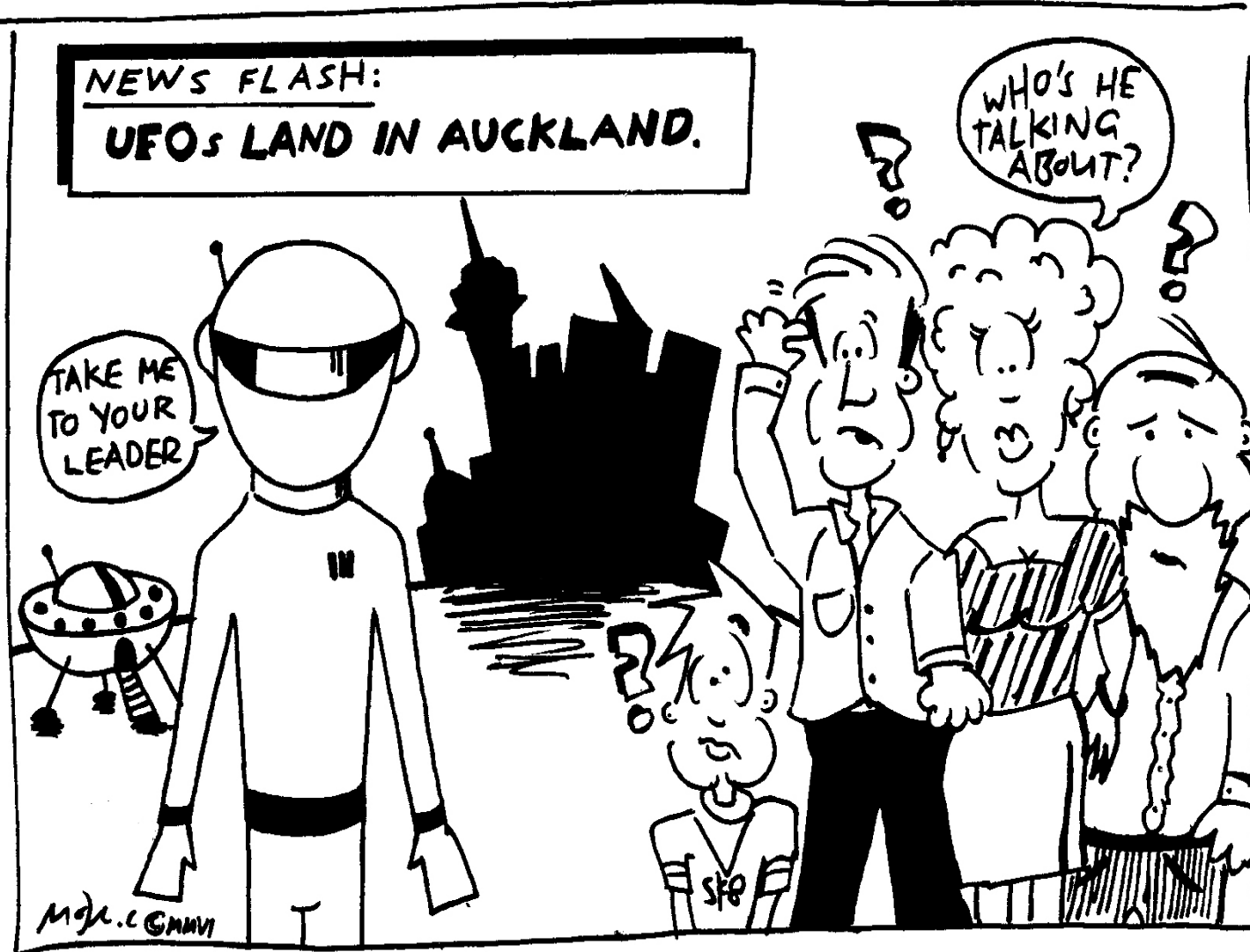
Yet of the money being invested into Auckland transport, only \$147 million is going towards public transport.

"We see that as a good example of Auckland central not being listened to and of poor representation of this region," says Calder-Watson.

"The Labour Government has invested in public transport. It's just nowhere near enough. With the population growth in Auckland, it needs to be a lot more."

Calder-Watson says many of those representing Auckland central in Parliament do not seem to have a realistic perspective of what it is like to live in the CBD. It is important for MPs to stay connected to the issues of their electorates and to advocate for their electorates, "rather than just going along party lines", he says.

But former United Future Auckland Central candidate Steve Taylor, now with the National Party, says Parliament is not responsible for advocating for Auckland.



"That is the role of Aucklanders," he says, but admits Auckland's CBD is represented poorly in Parliament.

Tizard has done "nothing" for Auckland, and was "vacuous" in her response to the recent Auckland power crisis, Taylor says.

NZ First MP Pita Paraone also believes there is room for improvement in Parliament's representation of central Auckland.

He says the state of roading infrastructure and the June energy crisis are proof of this.

"If there was more communication and collaboration I think we could have done a

little more than what we've done so far," he says.

"There has to be a willingness to work cooperatively to achieve a common goal."

He says both local body and central government politicians need to meet on a more regular basis. And they need to do so irrespective of their party affiliations.

"I think that if there's any impediment to progressing Auckland issues, maybe it's because of the different political philosophies that people have," he says.

National MP and Auckland candidate Pansy Wong says progress for Auckland is hindered by delays in legislation.

She says policies are developed, "but even if you have funding you simply can't get things done".

Progress often hinges on whether legislation causes delay, she says.

"We want development. If the Government isn't passing that legislation it'll continue to put pressure on."

Wong, Paraone, Taylor and Calder-Watson all say Auckland has the potential for a bright future — but if certain issues are not addressed it could be bleak.

Representatives from United Future and ACT were not available to speak to *Te Waha Nui*.

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John Tomlinson: I don't know who represents us in Parliament. The main issue in the area is traffic. My son goes to university and he has to leave at 6am to get to lectures at 8am. And Parliament is not doing a good job of representing the area. If some of them lived here all of the time we'd certainly have a much sharper place.



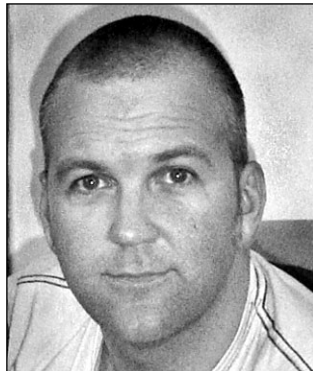
Natasha Doudkevitch: I have no idea who the MP is for this area. But the main issues are the buildings — there are too many small apartments — it's an ugly city. And it doesn't look like anything's getting better. They're just building more.



Chris Novak: I can't remember our MP's name — and to be honest I have no idea what they've done for the CBD. But I think the major issues facing the Auckland CBD are transport and infrastructure. The public transport and roads need to be improved. All I know is I spend too much time in traffic each morning and each night.



Simone Bonney: The main issues for the CBD are roads, traffic congestion, public transport, rates and housing. I have no idea how well represented Auckland is in Parliament. I know Hubbard is the mayor, but I don't recall who got the seat in Parliament. I would like to think that only people living in the electorate could be voted in.



Chris Jones: I have no idea who my MP is or what they've been doing for the area. The main issues in the CBD are traffic and public transport. We have a rail system that basically covers less than a third of our city. And buses are supposed to be used to ferry people to and from major transport hubs like train stations, not as the only form of transport. I don't think Parliament is doing much about public transport.

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