

## 28 March 2006: Commissioners praise People's Inquiry process.

Commissioners praise people's inquiry process. Media Release 28 March 2006

At the close of the People's Inquiry , the Commissioners issued the following statement:

We thank all those who gave oral or written testimony to the Inquiry. We acknowledge your courage in coming forward and speaking publicly about painful experiences. We also thank the organisers for the competence and professionalism they brought to the Inquiry. It should be noted that the Inquiry is extraordinary in having been brought about by the unpaid labour of members of the affected community itself. It became clear to us that this involved many hours of emotionally and physically taxing work. We were deeply impressed by the dedication of the organisers and many of the witnesses to others in their West Auckland community. We thank Te Piringatahi O Te Maungarongo marae for making us welcome and Waitakere City Council for hosting the Inquiry, and we particularly thank Warahi Paki and Fred Holloway for their guidance and care. We will consider carefully what we have heard here; we hope to complete our report by 30 June 2006. The People's Inquiry steering committee would like to thank the Commissioners for listening to the people with care and consideration and look forward to receiving their report and recommendations. We would like to acknowledge the strength and courage of the community who have presented their testimony. For many it has been very traumatic to go back and re-experience the dislocation, chronic health issues and feelings of despair associated with the spray days. The obstructive manner and callous disregard by officials who ran the spray program and health services have left a real bitterness and mistrust of government and health professionals amongst the community. The mismanagement and chronic breakdown of relations with community may jeopardise future co-operation and trust for biosecurity operations by government. In response to a Commissioner's question "why did you come to give your story today?" one participant said; "Because if we don't do this now then it will happen again to our children and our children's children". The community voices have been clear they never want a community to have to suffer an aerial spray program again.