

# The Countdown For Kokiri Tapu Misa

**The man who will lead Auckland into Kokiri is quietly, unshakeably sure that it is a move in the right direction. "It's got to be", he says calmly.**

Albie Williams is in his office, looking over Ponsonby Road. The sunlight is unexpectedly strong for May and the din of the first rush of homeward traffic is deafening.

He is searching for words to describe the kokiri concept. He tries: "People as opposed to Bureaucracy", and plays around with it until it becomes something like the battle of The People versus Bureaucracy.

It is difficult to try to coin, one phrase, the gradual transition of a Government bureaucracy into an increasingly people oriented, people managed agency. In a public service country like New Zealand it comes as something of a revolutionary step. Little wonder that the department carries with it a distinct pioneering air these days.

Albie continues: "Kokiri is an expansion into efficiency — a way of meeting the needs of the people more effectively." In Auckland it is an expansion of what will be well under way by the end of May where the department of Maori Affairs is decentralising its community services division and taking it into the communities.

In terms of the department's attitude, it is an attempt to abandon the welfare tag.

"The department has traditionally been associated with welfare," says Albie. We are now abandoning welfare — It has connotations of a people who need help, an impression of a people who can't stand up and do anything for themselves.

"It's an impression that has to be demolished."

In its place the department has evolved a new development ethic. One which hinges on the involvement of the community: Kokiri.

Community services would now work through kokiri units as small administration groups acting to unite voluntary associations to thrash out the priority needs of the community. What resources the department has for community service are then allocated.

The concept is a recognition, says Albie, that the social problems the department has wrestled with over the years were not going to be solved by an army of bureaucrats. "If you put 500 more police officers out on the streets, or 500 more community workers, it's not going to solve the problem of street kids and you only end up creating a larger bureaucracy to serve those extra people. You are no nearer to serving the needs of the community."

## Back up

A far greater idea was to make use of the community groups already existing, work in with them and back them with the resources the department might have used to set up new programmes.

Not only a better use of resources, says Albie, but a better service to the people. "We are making the department more accountable to the people. If the people monitor our work, if they have a say in how the department uses its money, then obviously we have a far more responsible way of working."

"We want to create in kokiri a situation where the people are planning our work on a day-to-day basis."

The kokiri experiment debuted in Wellington a little over a year ago, where three units are now operating.

Auckland is to have seven kokiri units — Papakura, Otara, Mangere, Eastern Suburbs (Maungarei), West Auckland (Waipereira), North Shore (Waitemata), and Central Auckland (Tamaki). Added to this are the two core units, in Ponsonby and South Auckland (Wiri).

Albie hopes to draw off the Wellington experience and avoid any pitfalls in the Auckland transition, but only to an extent. Wellington is after all Wellington, and "we are Auckland, we are different."

Not for nothing is Auckland called the biggest Polynesian city in the world, and the sheer size and sprawl of Greater Auckland make it a different proposition to Wellington.

## Decentralise

Its decentralisation has been taken with care, for those reasons. Here, the department has been canvassing public opinion on the Kokiri move for the past year, with a "bit of promotion" on the side.

The time is now right, Albie says. All the signs are good: "The people are giving us all the right vibrations."

The vibrations from within the Auckland office seem to be just as "right". His staff are happy with the way the department is heading, happy to be working for an organisation that can claim to be in tune with "ordinary people".

But?

"You will always get your unbelievers. Any organisation which changes has people in it who fear that change." "People never like anything which is going to shake them out of their world," says Albie.

His new position in the Kokiri set up is not an enviable one. For the head of

kokiri operations from Rotorua northwards, the pressure of responsibility will be intense. Especially in a department which is more directly responsible to the hardest taskmasters of all — The Public.

"It's not as if I'm going to be alone," he shrugs. "I will simply be a manager with staff at my disposal. At any time I can call on certain resources that I have here."

He sees his part in kokiri as making sure that kokiri ideals are adhered to, that the units have a solid backing and that all things are in "their proper place."

The next three to six months are going to be crucial, both for kokiri and Albie.

Monitoring will be the key to ensuring that the department does not deviate from its basic aims. "If you start going in the wrong direction and if people move away from the aims of kokiri then we have to bring them back into line very quickly..." "We have to go carefully. Maybe the word is to steer it right, from the very beginning."

## Monitoring

Yet while community division becomes redefined, the bureaucratic side of the department undergoes little, if any, change.

What is now Auckland District Office, will become a core unit, existing to serve the "paper needs" of the kokiri units. Legal section, Trust, Court and Trade Training are virtually unaffected. Housing may come in for some reviews but this would be due to the current downturn in housing.

However, "Kokiri may mean for these staff that they will be utilised in a better way. Some of the people in these sections may be just a little bit more extended."

His intention is to create a crack bureaucratic core, no less. His plans for maximum efficiency are: Intensifying work in clerical; the training of individual kokiri heads in every aspect of the concept, in knowing how to present it to the community and in how best to put it into practice.

The rationale is simple. A bureaucracy which is more directly accountable to the people, which is more tightly monitored by the people, cannot afford to be "loose".

Albie is aware that, perhaps even greater than the pressure on him will be the pressure on his community officers and executive officers in the units. It is they who will be under the close scrutiny of the people, and they who must "account" daily to the people.

"And people are first billing in this department."