



Media Release

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Chief Ombudsmen to Address Residents Association Conference

Chief Ombudsman Beverley Wakem will provide the keynote address to a gathering of residents' association representatives at a conference in parliament next month.

Spokesman for the Residents 2010 Conference, Tom Law, says Ms Wakem's presence at the conference adds considerable cachet to the event.

"The work of residents' associations is becoming more important as society fragments due to social and technological changes," says Mr Law, "Residents' associations are at the heart of many communities, providing informal coordination and support to citizens."

"The Office of the Ombudsman is the shining light of our democratic system - it is important that the people at the grass roots of civil society have been recognised in this way."

The Residents 2010 Conference aims to show that people can take responsibility for what happens in their communities. Mr Law says there are a number of signs that ordinary Kiwis have had enough of being "shoved around" by local and central government agencies.

"People are frustrated. The state of the economy has affected them. Our system of local government has little accountability. Politicians promise and don't deliver – or worse, they act in hypocritical ways. People are looking for a way to take control back.

"Kiwis are standing up to take responsibility for the future of New Zealand.

"This conference is all about enabling that to happen."

Interest in the conference has been strong with about two-thirds of the expected number of delegates already confirmed. The organisers will review numbers later in the week and decide whether to increase the size of the event.

Mr Law expects there to be a number of positive outcomes, including action to improve awareness of the law and the public profile of residents' groups.

"We are hoping that there will be ongoing activity after this event – perhaps some sort of collective of residents' associations that will support one-another at the regional level."

People interested in attending the conference can find more information at www.residents.org.nz/residents2010.

ENDS

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