

# Last quarter for Counties netball

By **ALAN APTED**

Netball Counties Manukau is set to be disbanded.

That's the wish of Netball New Zealand as it moves to reorganise the way the game is administered across the country.

The move's contained in a review that delegates from 12 regional bodies will vote on at Netball New Zealand's annual general meeting in February.

Under the proposal the 12 regional bodies that look after the game will disappear to be replaced by five zones.

Counties Manukau will lose its identity as it's absorbed in what will become zone one. That covers the region from Pukekohe in the south to Cape Reinga in the north and will force Counties Manukau into an alliance with Auckland/Waitakere and North.

The move is being made to ease the financial burden on the regions and improve the governance of the game.

It also has huge implications for the co-ordination, development and promotion of the game in south Auckland.

Much of that work over the last eight years has been done by Netball Counties Manukau.

But with its disappearance the responsibility will have to be shouldered by the six centres that now make up Netball Counties

Manukau: Papakura, Manurewa, Mangere/Otahuhu, Howick/Pakuranga, Waiuku and Pukekohe.

The popular Counties Manukau Regional Netball League, the premier league that Netball Counties Manukau instituted as part of its mandate, is also likely to disappear unless a centre takes charge of it.

Netball Counties Manukau board chairman David Ronaldson says there are some worrying implications.

"I guess one of the things that concerns us is that all the development work we currently do as a region is going to have to be picked up by the centres.

"I doubt whether all the work done by Netball Counties Manukau will be lost because you'd expect the zone to do some of the work that the region does at the moment."

Ronaldson says if the centres can't handle the load, they could bring a more professional management style and take responsibility for co-ordinating the development.

The reaction of the centres has been mixed, Ronaldson says.

Some centres think it would be good to get some of the control back.

"But I think in general they are concerned about losing the high performance work with the players, the coaching of

coaches and umpires.

"There will be a level lost there.

"It would be easy for the centres to get lost in the zone – being one little piece in a very large organisation.

"It will become much harder to say to a player in Waiuku or from a small centre like that – here is your pathway, you can go from Waiuku to Counties Manukau to a franchise or on to a New Zealand team.

"I think it is going to be much harder to define a pathway for a player to follow."

Ronaldson is adamant the regional premier league should be kept.

"We'd certainly like to see that carry on. We see an awful lot of benefit out of that. We see it as a great means of doing high performance with our players, coaches, umpires and bench officials.

"Everybody gets a lot out of that competition. Under the zone structure the centres could still work together and say yes we want to maintain that league.

"It will be up to the centres really to work as a team.

"Things like funding and sponsorship for those activities are going to have to be sorted by a centre. At the moment it is being run by the region.

"We organise it, co-ordinate it and get all the sponsorship and funding for it."