

EVIDENCE 60
TOPIC PC85A-D, 86A-B, 87, 102, 114
SUB# Rural Plan Changes
DATE 25/07/2017

Good morning

My name is Lesley Armstrong-Jennings, and this is Gloria Bruni. We are committee members of the Tutukaka Coast Ratepayers and Residents Assn. All of us volunteer on that committee because we are passionate about the Coast. The Coast is the jewel in Whangarei's crown, because of the wildlife, because of the beaches. We want future generations to be able to live here and visit here and enjoy the bush and the Kiwi and the beaches just as much as we are. We've all lived here for many years, we are involved in groups that look after the local environment, I have a business on the Coast, and my family goes back several generations here too. We consult with locals thru our monthly Focus magazine, on our Facebook page, and our website, Tutukakacoast.com. Our monthly opinion polls of members, and other residents, have given us a good insight into their viewpoints on a wide range of subjects. We do not have any personal agendas with regards to the proposed Plan Changes.

TCR&R has a good relationship with the NRC and WDC and we want that to continue.

With regards to the plan changes, our disquiet began over a year ago, when a ratepayer approached us with concerns about errors in the Ngunguru Structure Plan. The Plan was created by an Auckland planner, who we doubt ever came to Ngunguru or even consulted Google Earth, with her plans including an alternate transport route running along a ridge line and through an urupa, some parts of Ngunguru left out of the plan, and more. These concerns were brought into sharp focus when we viewed the proposed plan changes.

You have read our submission, so you know we believe that the proposed plan changes sit on a base of incorrect or out of date information, including maps, statistics, and inadequate understanding of the terrain. Plan Change 85C states that Ngunguru has a surplus of residential land yet our figures refute that. Further, how can you make up a set of Plan Changes for Ngunguru and leave part of Ngunguru out, but then when you are talking about vacant properties as a basis for wanting no residential village expansion in Ngunguru, choose a different map that includes a larger area?

We also do not think a simple rollover of existing Living Environments to Rural Village Environments is sufficient to recognise the areas of High Natural Character and ensure that special character is preserved, if not enhanced.

Whilst the WDC has made responses to our 5 opposition points, nowhere in their responses do they address the problem of inaccurate and conflicting maps, submission point 375/1. On page 18 of their report they asked the Commissioners to reject that submission point, but gave no reason. On page 59 they again ask you to reject the submission point and again do not give a reason or include our request in the discussion. We think that ignoring parts of a submission is very unsatisfactory and that the Commissioners should direct the WDC to do their part of the process thoroughly.

With regards to the points they actually rebutted, the WDC say they consulted comprehensively. However, they did not respond to our concerns when we met with them a year ago, instead they just listened. We do not consider listening to be consultation. Consulting is listening AND talking, comparing data, coming up with a plan forward. In our submission we have documented all the conflicting or inaccurate information, as well as our mathematical workings of the data. Why isn't the WDC doing the same?

The rebuttal of our request for protection of ridge lines, areas of native bush and kiwi habitat, stated that the areas have very limited vegetation and thus do not need protection, and that existing rules protect ridge lines...this speaks to our point that the WDC need to come out and look at what they are ruling on. By rolling over the existing Living Environments to Rural Village Environments, they have placed residential living areas in areas of High Natural Character, full of native bush that is currently providing a buffer zone between people and kiwi.

And with regards to ridge lines, we have already submitted photos of houses clearly breaking the existing rules. WDC say "rules are sufficient to provide protection" but obviously they are not. There appears to be a disconnect between the people who create the rules and those who give out the permits. Just last month, residents of the Tutukaka Coast notified the WDC and ourselves that a developer was bulldozing bush areas. When we asked one of our councillors to ask the WDC planners whether the actions were legal, she was told they were. We pressed her to get details of how they came to that conclusion, and it was only then that they admitted they had given her incorrect information.

In conclusion, the fact that the WDC has not responded to parts of our submission, speaks of a disregard of fundamental issues. We can only assume there is a level of complacency or lack of direction that results in them putting forward plan changes based on incorrect information, of giving out information to councillors that is incorrect, of having a mixture of maps for a village that they use in an ad-hoc fashion, and so on. I don't like saying that, but what are we left with if they fail to engage with us?

And that is why we have asked them to stop. Fix the errors. And create a new plan for the Tutukaka Coast, one where the data is out in the open and where there is real consultation, one where they recognise that we live amongst wildlife and that tourism is our biggest industry. One that includes a biodiversity plan change, instead of leaving that for the future. Let's set up a process and a timeframe and do it. We are here to help. Go right ahead and do your plan changes for the rest of the region, but fence off the Coast, for want of a better word, and choose to do it once and do it right.