

**SUBMISSION TO THE HEARING ON THE URBAN AND SERVICES PLAN CHANGES TO THE
WHANGAREI DISTRICT PLAN**

I am Rosemary Morgan. I live with my husband, Richard, in Puriri Park Rd, Maunu, in a house we bought 34 years ago. We are now both retired. We love living here with a large garden and lots of trees, privacy and a caring and helpful community.

I am the secretary of the Puriri Park and Maunu Residents Society Inc which began life in an effort to reclaim the park opposite our house from Housing New Zealand so it could remain as a park. In this effort we were also battling the Whangarei District Council who had opportunities to buy the land from the Education Department but didn't follow their own policies and consult the people or take the matter to a full council meeting. We lost. So, in place of a beautiful park that is constantly used, we are to have a 37 state house development squashed onto 2/3rds of the park, which in no way fits the criteria for development in the Living 1 environment zone. Maunu people put their hearts, souls and money into our effort to retain the park and stop the Housing New Zealand development. From them we received a very clear mandate to oppose any development or changes that altered the character of the area. Proof of this was that of the 346 submissions received for the hearings 340 opposed the development. We have significant numbers supporting our group through our web site and Facebook.

We know our suburb and its residents very well and the residents do not want high density housing in any shape or form. This is why I am here both personally and as a member of our group, even though under the present system, we are unlikely to be really heard.

We are all disillusioned by the processes we have had to follow. The processes were intended to give the people a real say and some influence in local affairs. But it has all become so complicated and has been hijacked by expensive specialists, large corporates, government departments and local governments with unlimited funds. Most residents, after our fiasco involving Housing New Zealand, feel the proscribed process is a waste of time, that nobody is actually listening. They want to know what they have to do to be heard. After all, most of Maunu were actively against Housing New Zealand's environmental vandalism that is their development which we failed to stop.

Added to that is the difficulty in accessing material. I know the WDC are making all material available for the hearings, but it is all electronic. My experience in helping older people to complete submissions (just in our street) was an eye opener. Many do not have access to a computer or don't know how to access material. The WDC site doesn't help either. It is just too complicated. It is a cacophony of information with too many steps to the information you want. It needs an index system rather than following leads. Otherwise it looks as if the public are being kept in the dark or at arm's length deliberately. We need a new philosophy that the people do matter. To date, not all the population have had access to computer lessons at school. Large numbers in our cities are just not computer savvy or even own anything beyond a cell phone. The first barrier to sharing information is the highly computer literate. They just don't understand why the rest of us don't 'get it'.

The best and most basic example of the confusion we have faced with this issue, is the three changes in one year of zone names. Maunu began the year with a Living 1 Environment. By May the

WDC's Plan Change booklet called Maunu a Medium Density Residential zone. Also in May, the National Planning Standards were issued changing the names. Then by July we became either a General Residential zone or Medium Density zone, depending on how you interpreted the standards and the Council's own submission. Trying to establish what the descriptions or requirements are of these or any other zone, is a nightmare search of the Council's web site – if you have the time, knowledge, expertise and patience. Why was this knowledge not published in the local newspapers for all to read and understand?

Many submitters, this time, have just given up on the hearing process due to information overload, not being able to follow/understand Council information, finding the information or analysing submission outcomes. And planner-speak is another issue. Each group of people seem to have their own jargon which is impenetrable to others! Material arriving in bits doesn't help either. It has got to the point that you need to be a lawyer or a planner to sort it out. This is just not good enough. How do the people out there have any meaningful dialogue with the Council? The elected councillors are supposed to do this for their ward, but since the election they have disappeared from the ward. They have been sitting on their hands. Do they actually know what's going on?? Previously, a councillor sat as part of the Commissioners' panel. In that way there was a local voice. Nowadays, the people sitting in front of us are all Aucklanders with Auckland views. Without a meaningful voice, almost all the population of land//house owners (those who fund the Council) are disenfranchised. New Zealand is not a dictatorship, yet! But if we don't guard our democratic rights and have access to information easily, a dictatorship without all the trimmings (presidents, army parades etc) is what we will have in fact

I strongly support the Puriri Park and Maunu Residents Society Inc Further Submission. At this point I shall not be itemising either it or my own cross submission. I have already covered the details in my first submission and cross submission. I will just add that Whangarei is unique. Each suburb has its own style, character and ambience. This makes our residential areas special. We need to retain this character because it is one of the best features of our city. We do not want to lose this for high density, multi storey sameness which is happening in some areas in Auckland.

HOUSING NEW ZEALAND

While I am aware that my colleague Dr Grundy is going to detail the issues we have with the Housing New Zealand submission, I would like to make a few observations myself because I am seriously concerned at their attitude to the people who live in this city.

I am opposed to all aspects of Housing New Zealand's submission that seeks a reduction of the minimum lot sizes in any residential zone, including the re-casting of any of the associated rules at a lower level of discretion. At the same time, they have produced a map of new zones of their own making with vast residential areas declared 3 storey zones! Whangarei is essentially a single storey or two storey urban environment. It is not a mini Auckland!

I strongly oppose HNZ's proposed areas for 3 storey housing that covers practically all of Whangarei's urban areas. The ability to build multi-storey, high density developments within existing communities with no consultation or ability for communities to ensure that the character, or scale and density of their communities are retained, is against the law at the moment and should stay that way. Too often today, the existing communities are not receiving this respect and participation in the present processes followed by Housing New Zealand. One meeting of 1 hour in length with a few of their representatives who just want to tell you what they are going to do and

don't want to hear your view, does not make a consultation when they are planning to put 37 households on the park next door! Today you can't automatically assume that people will behave honourably, respecting other people and their rights when they have the power of a hefty government department behind them. It needs to be enforced.

The amendments that Housing NZ seek, with respect to lot sizes and lowering the level of discretion Council has, will result in the loss of amenity and loss in character, while excluding the local community from shaping the community they live in.

The amendments that HNZ seek would also result in a complete loss of certainty for people investing in residential housing with no effective control on high density developments that are out of character with the local community. This is exactly what they have done with their development in Puriri Park Rd.

I submit that high density development that includes net lot sizes significantly less than the proposed lot sizes in the various zones, should be Non-Complying. This would allow proper community input into such developments and ensure that such developments are consistent with the District Plan objectives and policies. This is what was not done in the case of the park in Puriri Park Rd. The will of the people of Maunu has been spat on, trampled on and walked over. HNZ wants to be able to do this anywhere in Whangarei and subsequently, in any New Zealand town or city. No area in New Zealand will be protected or safe from this determined onslaught by the juggernaut that is Housing New Zealand.

Housing NZ, a new Crown entity, has stepped over the mark with their submission. I refer to my cross submission. I stand by my criticisms of Submitter 268, Housing New Zealand. It is not their job to tell our city how the various zones should be established. That is total heavy-handed interference. The authors of this document have forgotten that their job is to provide housing, not rule our city. Are other cities going to be told how to zone their cities to suit Housing NZ or are they using Whangarei experimentally as an example for the rest of New Zealand? Is this insidious centralisation by stealth? We, as taxpayers, paid for the drafting of HNZ's submission which would take away our Council's rights, and our rights as citizens to take part in discussions of major importance to us. Is this a characteristic of our government masters these days? Communities are being disenfranchised and they feel it. No good can come from this.

I hope for a new era now that HNZ has become Kainga Ora. But can a leopard change its spots?