

For what you get, council rates cheap at twice the price

Not that there isn't probably a much better and fairer system for local bodies to collect revenue

It's a long time since anything got so many Aucklanders so wound up as has the ARC rates controversy. I've discovered that mine go up from \$120-odd to \$200 and a bit, which won't even be noticed in the family budget.

I know the amount only because I looked it up on the ARC's website; I haven't got a bill yet although it should have arrived more than a week ago. Nor have some of my neighbours, whose mailing addresses, like mine, differ from the official lot numbers and have done so since the subdivision was completed more than a decade ago.

I have emailed the ARC (and neighbours have phoned) but so far with no result, which I suppose is par for the course for a local authority bureaucracy. They can read and understand spoken English, but translating that into some sort of action seems beyond them.

Not to worry. In my email I served notice



GARTH GEORGE

that I would not permit the inability of the ARC to get my rate demand into my mailbox to deprive me of whatever prompt payment discount I might have qualified for, and certainly would not pay any penalty.

My \$200 is really a gift to the regional council, whose services I do not and am not likely to use and which I would like to see abolished, with its activities shared among territorial local bodies.

Now territorial local bodies — in my

case the eccentric Waitakere City Council under its delightfully loopy mayor, Bob Harvey — are a different matter altogether.

The \$1400-odd a year I pay to Waitakere City, considering what I get for it, is cheap at twice the price and life would surely be difficult if the services the council provides weren't right there at my fingertips, day in and day out.

Not that there isn't probably a much fairer system for local bodies to collect revenue — user-pays experts could surely come up with something — for it has always seemed to me that those of us who sacrifice to obtain our own homes are penalised.

Yes, I know that folk who rent pay indirectly through their rents but there are a lot of others who daily use a city's services and who pay nothing towards them.

So it might not be a bad idea, now that our Dear Leader herself has taken an

interest in the matter, to use this ARC furore as an excuse to start looking at different ways of financing local bodies and, indeed, at the constitution of local bodies themselves.

For I wonder if the tradition of electing fellow citizens to operate the parish pump for us hasn't had its day. Perhaps in these times of increasing complexity we should consider doing away with elected amateurs and appointing, by some means, a board of commissioners, for instance, to run our cities and districts for us.

These would be proven professionals in administration, finance, engineering, law (unfortunately) and so on who would be paid whatever the private-sector going rate is to get the job done with maximum efficiency and minimum cost, which is what business is all about, surely.

Remove the politics from local

authorities and the efficiency rate would rocket all by itself.

Meanwhile, I take advantage of all the good things that my local authority provides for my wife and me at a cost of something less than \$4 a day.

I drive on tarsealed streets, most of which are kerbed and channelled and provided with footpaths, although mine isn't. (A whole bunch of us petitioned the council to pipe and fill in the open drains and provide a footpath down both sides, but we were told quite bluntly that the council had more pressing things to do with our money.)

When I turn on the tap I get water, which at \$1.48 a cubic metre (1000 litres) is as good as giving it away; bodily wastes disappear instantly when I flush the toilet; and every week the household rubbish is carted off at a cost of \$1 a bag plus a \$17 annual waste collection charge that is part of the rates.

I go for a walk early in the morning on an expensive concrete footpath laid right

round a spacious park that is immaculately maintained by the council. It is the only sporting facility of the council's I use, but tens of thousands of my fellow citizens derive huge benefit from the city's parks and sportsgrounds and indoor facilities.

There have been years when the free public libraries run by the city have provided the full value of my rates and much more. I read three novels on average every week, sometimes more and never less — 150-plus books a year. To buy them would cost me at least \$3000, probably nearer to \$4500.

Everything is always going up, even wages, although they never seem to go up nearly as much or as often as everything else. So you'll hear no complaints from me if I have to pay a few dollars extra this year to the pretend eco-city in which I live.

For all its faults, it contributes hugely to my quality of life.

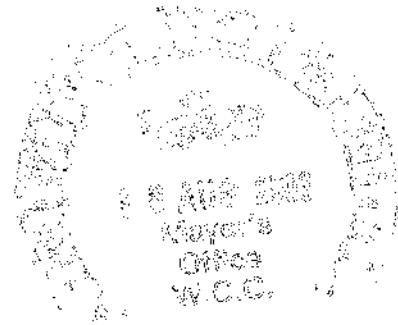
*garth_george@nzherald.co.nz



Donna H. Groh/Executive Director

July 31, 2003

Bob Harvey
Mayor
Waitakere City Council
Private Bag 93109, Henderson
Waitakere City Auckland New Zealand



Dear Mr. Harvey :

I am pleased to inform you that Annette Fenton has been recognized as an Advanced Leader for participation in the Toastmasters International Communication and Leadership Program.

Advanced Leader recognition is the highest award in Toastmasters' leadership program. To earn the Advanced Leader recognition, a member has completed our High Performance Leadership program, influencing and motivating followers to achieve a mission or goal. The member also has completed other demanding roles, including starting or rebuilding a Toastmasters club, and serving as a district officer in the organization.

Completing these requirements involves several years of study and activity. By achieving Advanced Leader recognition, Toastmaster Fenton has shown a commitment to excellence in leadership.

I know the outstanding achievement of Toastmaster Fenton will be an asset to you and your associates.

Sincerely,

Donna H. Groh
Executive Director

enclosure



Toastmasters recognition

Each time you present a prepared speech you'll be honing your skills in specific areas ranging from using visual aids to creating impact with your voice and gestures. After presenting ten speeches you can apply for recognition as a *Competent Toastmaster*, then proceed into our advanced speaking program.

Harvey Mackay
Bestselling Author
"I've never met anyone who didn't think Toastmasters was super valuable to their career. We gain self-esteem, self-confidence, assertiveness, listening skills, better sales pitches, better managers, better leaders..."

Tom Peters
Bestselling Author
In Search of Excellence and The Pursuit of Now
"Join Toastmasters. Oral communications skills count. Height and hair color may be in the genes, but public speaking isn't. One good answer to the public speaking problem is Toastmasters. They do a fabulous job of helping people shape up their communication skills."

What's the next step?

If someone from a Toastmasters club gave this pamphlet to you, attend that club and apply for membership. If you want to find a club that meets at a different time or location, see the Find a Club section of our website at www.toastmasters.org. You can also call or write to:

TOASTMASTERS INTERNATIONAL
P.O. Box 9052
Mission Viejo, California 92690, USA
(949) 858-8255 Fax: (949) 858-1207
e-mail: tminfo@toastmasters.org

In North America you can call our voice mail system at 1-800-993-7732 to request additional information and a list of clubs in your area. The fastest way to obtain information is to see our complete list of clubs at www.toastmasters.org.

For More Information Contact:

Club _____

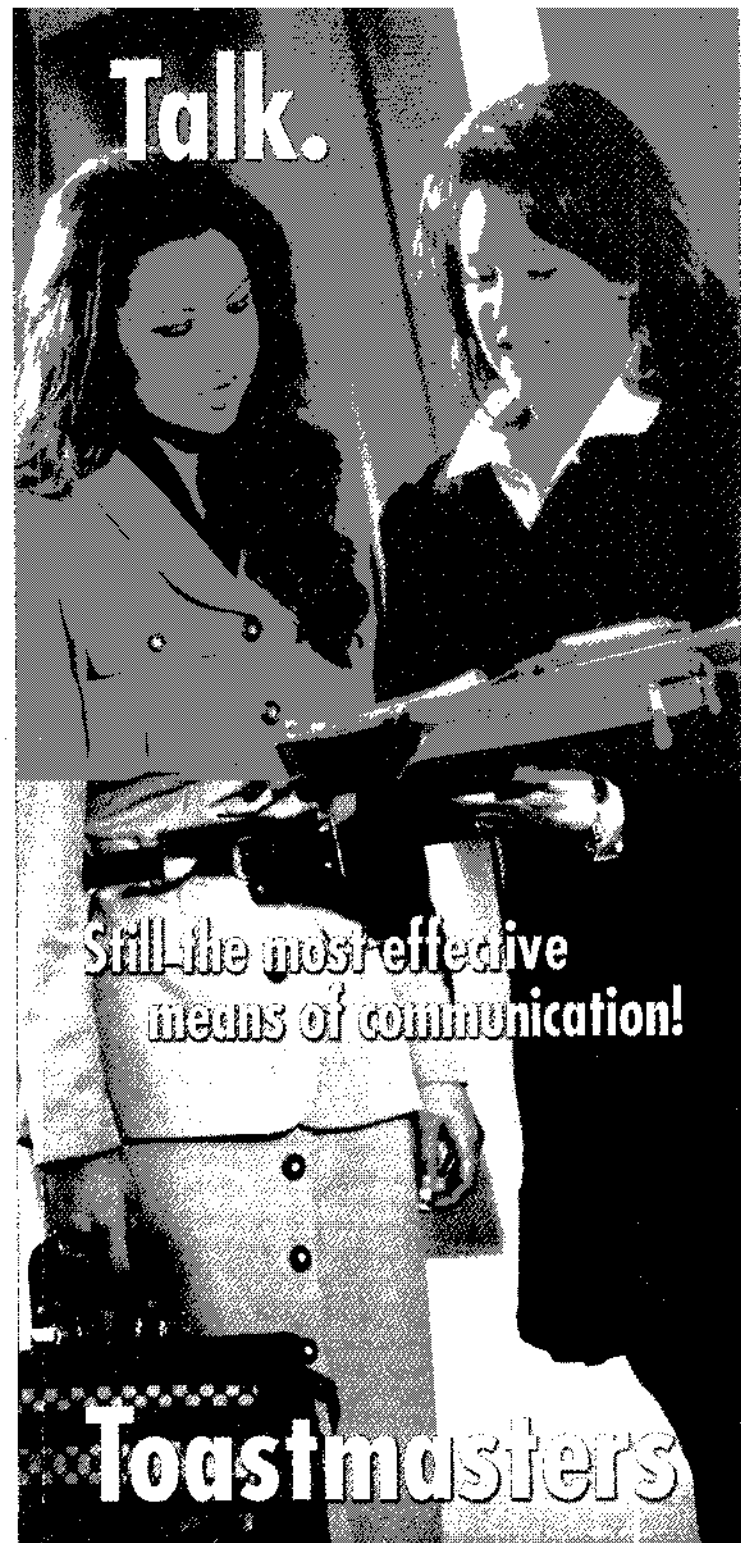
Time Day _____

Location _____

Telephone _____



Talk.



Still the most effective means of communication!

Toastmasters

"The self confidence I've gained as a result of speaking in groups has spilled over into many other aspects of my life. Today, I'm active in a civic organization in my community and because of my Toastmasters training I'm able to take on a leadership role."

E-mail. Voice mail. Fax. Cell phones. Quick fixes for a complex activity: communication. Today's work tools increase our efficiency but often decrease our effectiveness. When communication really counts we all fall back on the original solution: face-to-face conversation.

Toastmasters is the right choice for improving your speaking skills. We give you hands-on, face-to-face suggestions-for-improvement style communications training – in a friendly environment. You can't find it anywhere else.

At Toastmasters you'll learn to relax, plan, and present a terrific speech, whether you have 10 days to prepare – or just 10 seconds. You'll learn and practice in a friendly, comfortable environment with people who are there for the same reason you are – to become better communicators.

Everybody talks

At a Toastmasters meeting everybody talks – that's why you're there! You'll build "quick-thinking" skills as you present a one- to two-minute impromptu speech during *Table Topics*. At a later meeting you may be the one asking the *Table Topics* questions! Soon after, you'll introduce speakers, give prepared speeches, conduct the meeting, and perform many other roles.

Les Brown
 Author— *Live Your Dreams*
"If you want your dreams to come true you must have confidence in yourself and your abilities. A Toastmasters club can give you that confidence. Make your dreams a reality. Join a Toastmasters club."



Yes, but how do I improve?



You'll improve just by speaking regularly. But the key to the Toastmasters learn-by-doing

program is constructive evaluation. An evaluator will be assigned to you each time you give a prepared speech. Your evaluator will point out your presentation's strengths and offer suggestions for improving your next speech. At first you'll be recognized for your effort; later you'll be recognized for your skills.

Did someone say leadership?

You can't learn to be a leader in a day; it takes practice. In Toastmasters, you'll build leadership skills by organizing and conducting meetings and motivating others to help you. You can also build leadership skills by working on a project related to your personal or professional life, or by serving as a leader in Toastmasters.



"The mission of a Toastmasters Club is to provide a mutually supportive and positive learning environment in which every member has the opportunity to develop communication and leadership skills, which in turn foster self-confidence and personal growth."



"At work I had to give a sales presentation with only 48 hours notice! Because of my Toastmasters training I had the necessary tools to prepare. I actually had the sales reps clapping in agreement with me. Keep in mind that only one year ago I had anxiety attacks if I had to speak before an audience."

Anita Perez-Ferguson
 President—National Women's Political Caucus
"Toastmasters gives me the opportunity to regularly organize and present speeches. The skills I have learned and improved help me make a positive impression every time I speak."