

# **Council**

**Wednesday, 27 August 2008  
Commencing at 5.30 pm**

**REPORT OF THE MAYOR**

**SUPPLEMENT TO THE AGENDA FOR A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL TO BE HELD AT  
WAITAKERE CENTRAL, 6 HENDERSON VALLEY ROAD, HENDERSON,  
WAITAKERE, ON WEDNESDAY, 27 AUGUST 2008,  
COMMENCING AT 5.30 PM**

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**6 REPORT OF THE MAYOR**

**RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Council resolve to:

1. **Receive** the Report of the Mayor.
2. **Agree** that Council declare Waitakere as a plastic bag free zone.

As I start penning this report to you, yet another child lies critically ill in the Starship Hospital. The Herald says the child is critical and in a fragile condition. He is not moving very much says a doctor, and the police as usual, believe his injuries are not accidental.

Child Youth and Family add, also as usual, that the department had not previously been notified about any concerns about the boy. Yet the family seem to live a riotous life; the windows are broken, the neighbours report domestic arguments and parties at all hours. So what goes? Earlier this month I talked to the former judge at the Henderson High Court, one of the great and wise members of the judicial culture of New Zealand, the beloved Michael Brown. We both made speeches at St Matthews in the City about child abuse. I told him that I feel like David Lange when he said: *"It's all a bloody waste of time; nobody listens to me anyway or cares any more."*

Michael and I laugh it off. We both hope I am wrong. He says that we shouldn't overlap and I tell him that if we do it might be for a common cause because we are talking about a daily occurrence now, the terrible and ongoing tragedy of the abuse of our children.

*M1*

I've just returned from a weekend in Australia and the Australian papers were also bewailing the Australian abuse figures. They are not as bad as New Zealand, so the Melbourne Age says. It describes New Zealand as the abuse capital of the world, both for domestic and child stats. But Australia is coming close behind. This is one race we don't want to win. Certainly we didn't need to have in the Herald an incorrect story that the Waitakere Court was failing in initiatives to reduce family violence offending. The paper chose to assert the decrease was too small. I thought that angle was depressing and not in the interests of what we are working to achieve. Our response has started to make a difference, so the following redressing of this was very necessary though I am unsure how much mileage it got (attached at page M1).

Michael King in his book, A History of New Zealand, talks of the outward looking enthusiastic sporting achieving nation and the dark other.

Well I seem to find myself as mayor of Waitakere seeing a lot of the dark other and believe me the darkness is very dense. The outward looking New Zealand got a big airing this month in Beijing. We competed for medals, went for gold and sat on the edge of our seats. Well this month a lot of people will be sitting on the end of beds, hospital ones that is, attempting to save the lives of beaten, battered children. The darkness of the night is engulfing our young in a nightmare of horror, and as the popular song goes: The Beat Goes On.



The Sunday papers are a horror testament of our youth's domestic slaughter, of young innocent babies and small children. Child abuse in 2008 goes on and on without pause.

January, Tahani Mohamed, dies after suffering a skull fracture, brain and retinal haemorrhaging, April, Dylan Rimoni dies from head injuries, June a 22 month old Dunedin girl dies, July a 3 year old Avondale toddler is taken to Starship with life threatening head injuries and broken bones, July again a 7 year old dies from a suspected beating, and this month a 4 year old from Papakura.

These were the ones that died. The other 60 throughout New Zealand may never lead normal lives and the District Courts and the Child, Family and Youth Services will vainly try to resolve it.

And I have a feeling they won't succeed.

Not a lot has changed. In fact it has got worse. Because we have allowed it to. We make a thousand excuses and still thousands of kids are maimed, beaten and thrashed.

The tragic statistics go on and on relentlessly, and it is not as if we haven't known the key to resolving the issue.

It is not rocket science to know or understand what is going on. But political correctness, the terror of being ostracised, being called a fascist or racist, has allowed this horror to continue while the support agencies; overworked, and under funded continue to stress out.

And by the way, not talk to each other, another crime against society and our children.

But the real crime is that we collectively make excuses and seek reasons not to take remedial action. Well it is not rocket science either because the numbers that we are dealing with are not huge. This is also a country of functional families where love and wellbeing is the norm. But when it is not, then danger looms and disaster and tragedy are close.

Do I have the answers? Not all. But I think I have one. And it is clear. The answer is early childhood intervention. Put that now in neon above the harbour bridge and on Te Papa and on the Beehive.

We know if we can get to the babies, even before they are born, we can intervene with all it takes, with the whole of the might of the social services, government agencies and ourselves. And police if necessary, and stop this violence in its tracks. But we don't and it's time we asked why not.

Good on Hone Kaa for raising the issue at a hui. Pakeha New Zealand sat on its hands. But they did listen for I think this was the first time Maori were stepping up to the plate with an issue that certainly involves them in a major way. But they are not alone with ownership of baby thrashing. You could say it is widely spread through the cultures and communities. In Waitakere, John Tamihere at the Waipareira Trust tells me that they could probably provide a list of the 100 odd families that are at risk. And I am sure that echoes every community. These people are not a secret. They are known to every agency in the book, and yet between the lot, the fumbling, like the beat, goes on endlessly and unrelentingly. This is where the mystery deepens. How come all these well meaning professionals with a depth of knowledge somehow miss the signs of distress before it's too late? So where are the road blocks? That is what we have to ask. I asked that of our domestic violence programme. The answer is, they don't talk that easily between themselves; silos in a dark and troubled night.



Early childhood intervention means taking serious, drastic and immediate action. I believe strongly that some children, new born, should not actually be allowed to go home. It would have saved the Kahui twins if this was the case. When dysfunctional families are spotted and they are, at hospitals, and in the birthing rooms, why is action not taken? Rather than waiting for the hand wringing media response, the front page of the Herald or Dominion telling of yet another teenage family who party into the night and then throw the kids against the wall.

Where is the neighbour's intervention? Family and friends. Seems to me, absent. Until the inevitable tangi or life support withdrawal.

If this isn't serious, what is?

In Waitakere, this proud council has gone out on a limb to call domestic violence what it is, a crime against society.

And so is child abuse. It is against everything we hold dear, across all religions, all decency and dignity. So while we salute our proud athletes efforts in Beijing, a distraction of 10 days or so, I think this country needs to look into the dark and deep flipside of hype.

There is a conspiracy of silence, of fear, of retribution, and a stigma that New Zealanders and those in the social services are reluctant to cross. Why? Because careers can be jeopardised in this small focused media- hyped country. To get on the wrong side of any issue, race or controversy can damn you for life. And so we don't go there. And that adds to the darkness and despair and the continuation of our dilemma. Why do we lack the guts to do something about it?

Firstly, we have to organise our community to be more responsive, neighbours have to be aware and act. So do families, grandparents too have to be part of the responsible awareness. And early intervention again matters, aroha, support really can pay off in the early phases of any relationship. And communities with all their myriad of organisations need to be put on alert at the very outset of problems. These are key to establishing a more workable non-violent society where everything is local.

I for one have had a gutful of politically correct behaviour, and with our attitude. I call on our politicians to start resolving this community curse, before they get too embroiled in their own survival. Maybe they could spend some time on the survival of our young defenceless kids. And if they need to be removed, into care, love and support, then so be it. But give them at least an opportunity to live, to survive their parents and caregivers. And give us a chance to breathe easy.

### **Milestones**

### **Obituaries**

One of the great kaumätua of the Kaipara passed away earlier this month. Whero Nahi was a man of outstanding mana, kindness and integrity. He was a true leader and brought together the ancient pasts of the Ngati Whatua ki Kaipara and the modern world of 21<sup>st</sup> century Aotearoa. He was a gentle and kind man and I had two dealings with him which convinced me that I was dealing with someone with real presence and power. The council of Waitakere saw Whero as the kaumätua that brought our chief executive from Rodney to this city. In the company of the Mayor of Rodney, her worship, Penny Webster, staff and directors. Whero had a lovely sense of bearing and wisdom and humour. His untimely death saw him lying in state on his home marae and a massive tangi held in pouring rain and cold temperatures on Saturday, 9 August 2009. This city of Waitakere would like to pay a tribute to him and to acknowledge his wāhau who I have written to on behalf of this Council and the city.



**Hamish Keith: Native Wit  
Coming Our Way soon at the Going West Festival**

Can I urge you all to book your seat for this year's Going West Festival.  
17 August to 30 September.

This is New Zealand's largest literary festival based in Titirangi and which will return to the theme of the very first Going West festival in 1996, as Naomi McCleary says on a very cold day in a tin shed at the Corban Estate with around 100 people, when we celebrated our own writers, not as support acts for overseas luminaries, but a line up of some of our oldest and dearest writers, and some of our rising stars. Today Going West is nationally acknowledged and respected. It is a fantastic line up. And programmes are now circulating and available everywhere.

I will be doing a Saturday slot interviewing that curmudgeon, grumpy, and to use his own expression, miserly fellow, Hamish Keith, who in my opinion should have taken the Montana Book Award with his excellent *THE BIG PICTURE: A history of New Zealand Art from 1642*. I digress. For this is about his very own book, the memories of the Boulevardier and sometime contributor to the Metro's great Ferret days with his companion in crime, the fabulous black lips, aka Judith Baragwaneth, who I saw the worse for wear at Greg McGee's launch the other week (now I am sounding like the Ferret myself!)

So before I interview Keith I asked the publisher Random House to send me a copy of the manuscript and they did. And I have to say I couldn't put it down. It is a great and ripping read. It is aptly called; *Native Wit*.

Hamish has always had a wonderful turn of phrase and deeply insightful observations of the soul of Aotearoa New Zealand.

When Hamish first came to Auckland from Christchurch, he landed in Titirangi, put up by friends. He explains his experience there opened his eyes to the depths of this country's unique landscapes and painter Colin McCahon's interpretations of them:

*"Titirangi was about as far about of town as you could get; their part of Titirangi was almost as far away again. Eric McCormick in his memoir The Inland Eye described Titirangi as a 'sylvan slum'. He was not wrong. He might have added it was also a slum dripping wet and gouged out of soggy yellow clay and red ochre mud. It was a suburb that a great many people lived in because that was all they could afford. McCahon was one of those. It was also a suburb where the soon-to-be affluent could afford to buy land and build their new house. My hosts were among them.*

*They lived at the bottom of Konini Road, then only partly sealed. It was a muddy 15 minute slog up the hill to Scenic Drive and 40 minutes more into town on an ancient shambling bus filled with sullen Westies. I loved it. I had never been in a place like this before. There were birds I had never heard, trees I had never seen, wiry sooty-limbed manuka dotted with white star-like flowers, slashes of red clay so red and blue skies so blue, all caught in a sharp, clear light diced up into slices and chunks that made your eyes ache. I knew the magic McCahon had seen here and my inward eye, half closed for so long, began to open on to something quite marvellous.*



*I was literally walking through the show I had seen at Webb's gallery. (With one of my first pay packets I bought one of those paintings.) When McCahon wrote of these Titirangi and French Bay paintings, he said that he had seen like the blind man in the gospel of St John miraculously given his sight, who saw 'men like trees walking.' I knew what he meant. (Although I can't find that in the Bible Harry Hornsby gave me. Maybe that was McCahon's gloss on St John. If the blind man didn't say it he should have. It was a good thing to say. McCahon's Bible always seemed slightly more interesting than the original.) There was a life to this landscape that I had never seen in a landscape before. I began to think that the light of this place must have some part to play in shaping its art."*

So don't miss it. *The Going West* literary weekend programme, *The Word Around Us* will go for two days from 19<sup>th</sup> -21<sup>st</sup> September. Also don't miss *Strange Resting Places*, a play that has had spellbinding reviews, at the Glen Eden Playhouse from Wednesday the 27 August to Saturday, 30 August 2008.

(Naomi can organise tickets for councillors. The council proudly sponsors this truly local event with Douglas Pharmaceuticals and many others including our friends from the Trusts.)

### **From Samoa to New York, via Laingholm and Henderson**

It's a long way from Henderson's Corban Estate to Broadway in New York. But internationally acclaimed Laingholm choreographer, Lemi Ponifasio and his 24 strong dance troupe, MAU, have made the trip from their rehearsal space here, to the bright lights of New York's famed Lincoln Centre. They performed his Samoan take on Mozart's Requiem there earlier this month. The piece was previously performed in Vienna and at the South Bank Centre in London.

The New Yorker magazine says the piece "has no Mozart in it, but is rather a soundscape of community songs, dripping water, and chirping crickets... a spare, shadowy and extremely slow-moving ritual given a contemporary gleam, a procession of strange images.....it's sure to strike some as mysterious and subtle and others as soporific."

Lemi Ponifasio has an interesting take on why he wants to take his performances from the Pacific to the stages of Europe and the United States:

*"I used to dance everywhere, on the streets, in bars, villages, everywhere and still do. But I found that it is more powerful to go and dance in the powerful places where the powerful people are, who are making powerful decisions about us. They will sit for 90 minutes and watch and listen – so for me it is much more effective than to dance under the tree, in the garage or on the beach."*

Lemi says it is important how we view dance, to understand where dance is coming from. *"When the Lincoln Centre asked us to come - I suggested they come and visit us - they came. Dance is a serious human exchange. It is important they experience our environment, how we live our lives so when we go there they understand where we are coming from - it's a conversation, we have to make relationships that are deep and meaningful. If dance is supposed to be an expression of your life, why do it in a meaningless way?"*



MAU and Lemi's work is such a fantastic example of the way Pacific cultures can have a global impact. For councillors who have missed out on the invitations to be present at these performances, let me tell you, you have missed out on the experience of a lifetime. They don't come more mysterious or captivating than the MAU dance theatre performances.

### **The Latest on the Royal Commission**

*M2-M20*

Over the last couple of months I have been throwing out 20 years of Metro magazines and what an absolute joy they are. To say they are being thrown out with gusto would be a lie. The truth is I can hardly bare to lose them. No sooner do I pick up an issue, than I start reading the index. I am then hopelessly immersed. They are full of an amazing history of Auckland and frequently of Waitakere and so as a special treat I am including two samples that seemed to be relevant to our present troubled times. I'd like you to read Amalgamation: What You Lose and What You Gain, attached at pages M2 to M10 and compare it with what we are being told now. 'Amalgamation' was written by Tom Hyde and takes in the demise of boroughs throughout greater Auckland and the thoughts of Bassett and the opponents to the amalgamation. Hyde was one of the best writers of the 80s and is still at the craft working freelance. The other extraordinarily well written article is by the late great Max Chapple, also one of the greatest writers that Metro employed, attached at pages M11 to M20. His analysis of the downfall of the ARC. The ARC Follies, is really worth a read. The ARC was going through a very difficult period under the chairmanship of the former mayor of Auckland, Colin Kay, who died recently and whose funeral I attended. And Colin Knox, the CEO who I think sued over this article. It is worth, in hindsight, reading the windstorm that this article created. Knox has gone on to do a great job with Maori education and become a consultant to major corporations and Colin Kay kept cycling into his 80s until a stroke last year laid him low. And the ARC, well what can I say about that august body that you don't know already?

### **Saying Goodbye to Viv**

Every time the police commander came to Waitakere my only complaint with the otherwise excellent police unit was that the commander changes every six months. And for a while it did seem that way. They were all passing through. And I question the culture of any organisation that would be resilient to such unrelenting change.

Last month, the great friend of Waitakere City Council Mark O'Connor announced that he would be stepping down as assistant superintendent due to a health scare. The famously fit, lean Mark learnt that he had a heart condition and before he knew it he was on the operating table. He will still be staying in the force but will take a less stressful role. I would like to acknowledge him with respect and true thanks for his absolute unfailing dedication to Waitakere and policing. Wherever this council went, Mark was there with us.

We wish him well. I thought he was a great team player and when Viv Rickard was appointed a couple of years back, I thought we had turned the corner with two superb police chiefs that understood the west and our issues. I knew the writing was on the wall though when Rob Pope turned up in my office a couple of weeks ago to brief myself and the chief executive on how we are doing out in the west. And on that front, the news is not bad; in fact we are going well. Expectations are up to target and police crime resolution is very high and that's where it counts. In other words, they catch the crooks. This was most obvious in the widely publicised diary shooting in Rua Road, which saw the assailant quickly apprehended, and a vigilant and caring community immediately rallying round the victim.



Pope did drop a hint that Viv was destined for higher more hallowed ground. And now it has come to pass. And it is with some sadness, but without surprise that we farewell Viv Rickard. Some of you may recall I even initially declined to formally welcome him, saying he would be gone before the ceremonial cup of tea went cold!

No sooner do we build a relationship and rapport than they are whisked off to Wellington. Well it has happened again. Congratulations, however, to Mr Rickard and his promotion. Moving along up the ladder with Viv is Steve Shortland who is shifting to Auckland from Manukau Counties to take on the newly created role of Assistant Commissioner of Auckland. It was rumoured that the police were considering a retired traffic cop and I am certainly grateful that didn't eventuate. Steve cut his teeth as a very senior and highly respected detective in the west.

### **And finally: An End to Plastic Bags**

Dear colleagues, the seconds are ticking and Waitakere's place as the first city in New Zealand to banish the blight of plastic bags will pass and that honour, and indeed it is, will go to Wellington or Christchurch and New Zealand's first eco-city will be seen as a back room player in what is not a very difficult thing to do. I want to praise as always the efforts of Judy Lawley and her efforts with Titirangi and Green Bay. Both of course have supermarkets who are not being particularly difficult about it but I have to say clearly when Paris, London and San Francisco are banning plastic bags, is this a big deal?

I realise they need a decent exit so I am not asking that the council put a bylaw through for Christmas, although that might be something to cheer on, but I would suggest now that we give notice that by the end of 2009 Waitakere will be the first city in New Zealand to have paper and cloth bags for our shopping purposes. No ifs or buts, that's the way I am suggesting and I would like this council to acknowledge our environment, our planet and our city. I am sure our friends at the supermarkets will easily transform themselves as they are doing anyway to a more environmentally friendly business. There will be some groans, but believe me, it is coming sooner or later and for Waitakere it should be sooner.

I therefore with great pleasure would like to recommend that this council resolve to declare Waitakere a Plastic Bag Free Zone, and end the use of petroleum-based plastic bags by the end of 2009, and partner the businesses of this city in specific initiatives to introduce replacements including cloth, corn starch, paper and recyclable plastic bags.

It means what it says: The End of the Plastic Bag.

*M21-M22*

If you want to know more look at the attachment on this global issue at pages M21 to M22.

RA Harvey, QSO, JP  
**MAYOR OF WAITAKERE**