

Mayor Bob Harvey
Speech to open the Community Summit on Youth and
Drugs
Waitakere City Council Chambers
9am, 02 April 2004

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has.”

That’s a great quote. It comes from Margaret Mead. And it’s what I hope this summit will be about. About a group of committed people. The ones in this room. Working together to change the lives of young people in Waitakere City.

We live in a country in which alcohol and cannabis are the drugs of choice for our youth. A country in which users are starting younger than ever. Aided, in some instances, by parents who are drug users themselves. And by booze barons targeting young people with products that are little more than children’s soft drink plus alcohol.

It is in this context that we find more than half our youth engaged in frequent binge drinking. It is in this context that the number of P-related calls from the Auckland region to the Alcohol and Drug Association Helpline rose from 50 to 557. Between 2002 and 2003. By more than 1000 per cent. In one year.

We have a growing trend towards injecting drugs. An increase in depression and self harm associated with substance abuse. And domestic violence helpers, feeling overwhelmed by the impact of drug use on families.

When we look for causes we see middle class families in which both parents work and rarely spend time with their children. We have homes in which drug or alcohol abuse is as normal as watching television. We have well-intentioned parents without the skills to set boundaries for their children. We have boys who grow up with no positive male role models. Their sole parents are women. Their teachers are women. Their male role models are rappers and violent action heroes.

Despite all the sensational media headlines, we have a community remarkably uninformed about the effect of drugs. What they do to brain and body. How to recognise their impact on loved ones. What action to take when you do.

It is time, I believe, to lift our game. To plan together. To co-ordinate our efforts. It is time for all the different help agencies in this city to form "Waitakere Community Action".

It's not as if we don't have the people to do the job. I think of David and Marguerite Crickmer at the Life Education Trust. Our MP Lynne Pillay who organised a series of public meetings to talk about the impact of P. Dr Pita Sharples at Hoani Waititi Marae who has developed a P awareness and prevention programme. Te

Atea Marino. Tupu. Community Alcohol and Drug Services. And all the others.

We have some great resources. And as “Waitakere Community Action”. As a closely-linked network. I believe we can double our impact.

I do not believe, however, it will make sense to approach the problem of substance abuse as if it exists on its own. Detached from the rest of the world. We need to think about it in context. As it relates to parenting. As it relates to schooling. As it relates to the locations in which our at-risk young people find themselves in this world.

We have a young generation with big problems. Obesity. Depression. And rising rates of abortion and sexually-transmitted disease.

I am talking about the dangerous years. Between 16 and 20. When many of our young people are disengaged from sports clubs, cultural groups, and other stabilising social networks. Earning money for the first time. With the freedom and the means to really mess themselves up.

This is the age group that thinks itself immortal. That takes the big risks. Commences the taking of the illegal drugs; the bingeing on alcohol; the smoking of cigarettes; the unsafe sex; the crazy driving to prove manhood to your mates.

That is why I do not think we have only a “drugs problem”. What I believe we have is a problem

managing the more extreme risk-taking behaviour of some of our young people.

So what is to be done? Where do we go from here? I will be interested to see the answers you generate today. But for now, I have four suggestions.

First of all, let's do a community stock take. Let's see what resources we have. And let's find some mechanisms to link us all together as a network of helping agencies. We should engage with schools, marae, cultural groups, churches, sports groups and health providers. We should create a seamless process of referrals so we do not end up with multiple agencies, unaware of each other, dealing with the same family. We should use our extra power as a team to lobby for more resources.

Secondly, we need to increase the level of drug and alcohol awareness. In the kids. But also in the parents, and whanau, and communities that support them. We need to ensure that our public messages are consistent in order to ensure they are heard. We need to help parents struggling with difficult teenagers. To teach those parents how to set boundaries and resolve conflict.

Thirdly, let's work hard to give our youth-at-risk a sense of belonging in this world. Of being connected to others. Of having something worthwhile to offer. Let's help them into education and jobs. Get them eating right, and involved in sports and community activities.

And finally, let's get the Waitakere City role models out there. Visible. And talking. Not the same role models for everybody. We should engage all our different communities, and define effective role models for each. Then support those role models reaching their own people. They might be kaumatua. Or Ministers of religion. Or sports stars, educators, or musicians. Let's get our youth-at-risk into relationships with adults they can trust.

There are at least 30 agencies in this city that deal with our drug problems. Most of you are here now. We have some great people. There is no lack of commitment. But there is a lack of co-ordination.

To the news media I say: "help us". Help us to educate our parents about how to recognise the signs of drug taking. And to know how to react when they do.

To the parents I say. Never give up. The research is clear on this. Parents have more influence on their kids than they think. Your difficult teenager needs you. Even if they act as if they do not.

And to all of you here. I quote a Japanese proverb.
"None of us is as smart as all of us."

Let's make this summit count. Let's listen to each other. Let's stand together. As "Waitakere Community Action". To do the best we can for the young people of our city.

7 April 2004

Bob Harvey
Mayor of Waitakere City
Waitakere City Council
Private Bag 93 109
Henderson
WAITAKERE CITY

Greg Presland
Councillor
Waitakere City Council

Dear Bob and Greg

It was great to attend the launch of the Community Action on Youth and Drugs project at the Waitakere City Council Chambers on 2 April.

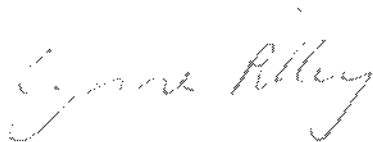
I believe the funding for this project is amongst our Government's most worthwhile investments. I was overcome by the commitment and support from the community – I know that in Waitakere we can meet the challenge together.

Please find attached a notice of a meeting on Monday 26 April. I would be very grateful if you could distribute it as widely as possible.

Thank you for all your support with this initiative and the numerous projects that WCC are involved in to make our city safer and healthier.

Best wishes

Yours sincerely



Lynne Pillay
MP for Waitakere

Att



Flag of inconvenience

As New Zealand considers redesigning its flag, David Fickling lays out the arguments for and against change David Fickling Monday April 12 2004 The Guardian

One of the strangest aspects of the west's global dominance has been the willingness of other countries to sign up to European idiosyncrasies in the apparent belief that they confer some measure of authority. Professionals in all but a handful of countries now wear business suits and ties to work, even though the uniform rapidly becomes impracticably hot as soon as you head south of northern Europe.

Equally strange is the worldwide adherence to flags; those strips of cloth used by European soldiers and sailors of yore as a clue to whether they should attack each other or not.

The situation is reminiscent of an old Eddie Izzard routine, in which a smug British imperialist tours the world uprooting native peoples because of their failure to come up with their own colours. "Do you have a flag?" he asks. "We don't need a bloody flag, this is our country, you bastards," replies the native. "No flag, no country," smirks the Brit. "That's the rules ... that I've just made up."

Visitors to west Auckland would have been forgiven of late for thinking the All Blacks rugby team had staged a municipal coup. Fluttering outside the offices of Waitakere city council has been a flag which is a dead ringer for the All Blacks' silver fern logo. Promoted by Wellington investment banker Lloyd Morrison, the design was run up the flagpole by Waitakere mayor Bob Harvey as a way of stirring up debate about the merits of a new flag for New Zealand.

Morrison launched the campaign and petition earlier this year to encourage New Zealanders to think about changing the blue ensign, the British naval hand-me-down which has served as the country's flag since a burst of post-Boer War patriotism in 1902. It's not the first time that Kiwis have thought about ditching the ensign. Debates on the subject have been a fairly common occurrence at Labour party conferences since the 1970s, and the "koru flag" designed by the late Austrian-born artist Friedensreich Hundertwasser in 1983 is still regularly used by greens and alternative lifestylers out in the New Zealand bush.

One major argument in favour of a change is that beyond Australasia, most people have difficulty distinguishing between the New Zealand and Australian flags - a circumstance that is particularly irking for Kiwis, who already suffer from something of an inferiority complex about their overbearing neighbour.

Both flags are overt reminders of the countries' pasts as outposts of the British empire. Their forerunners were adopted in 1865, on orders from London, to help identify the ships of British colonies; the ancestor of New Zealand's design was originally proposed, to the ire of locals, by the head of Britain's General Post Office.

Both have blue backgrounds, union flags at the upper left corners, and representations of the southern cross constellation. Vexillologists will note that New Zealand's stars are filled in with red; that its southern cross lacks Epsilon Crucis, the fifth star on the Australian version, and Australia's federation star below the union flag; and that the proportions of New Zealand's southern cross are slightly different. The rest of us will continue to think that it's simply the result of a child with a red crayon being let loose on the Australian ensign.

Lloyd Morrison's determination to push for a change means that he has been keen to keep the debate separate from more weighty constitutional issues, such as the possibility of a republic and the status of Maori affairs. But this is blind optimism. The insignia of a nation isn't one of those tractable issues that can be quarantined from more controversial subjects. Choosing an image to represent a

country inevitably involves asking questions about that country's identity, and deciding which aspects of that identity the country would most like to highlight.

Getting people to rally behind an airbrushed version of the All Blacks' insignia is a neat trick to neutralise such dissent, as rugby is as close as New Zealand gets to an uncontroversial vehicle of open nationalism.

But the only relatively painless major change to a national flag in recent years was the adoption of South Africa's new emblem in 1994, which buried the apartheid-era flag in the optimistic spirit of truth and reconciliation.

Canada's adoption of the maple leaf emblem in 1965 is often held up by proponents of such a change as a model of ease and unity. It was anything but: the ditching of the British imperial red ensign - driven in part by a pragmatic desire to head off an independence bid by Quebec - was filibustered for 37 days as it was debated in parliament.

Its prime opponent, former Conservative prime minister John Diefenbaker, hated the new design so much that he hung his head when it was unveiled and insisted that the red ensign take pride of place on top of his coffin when he was buried in 1979.

Any discussion about changing New Zealand's flag will similarly involve debating the status of the British union flag perched anachronistically in one corner. This in its turn will raise questions about New Zealand's relationship with Britain, which in its turn will invoke issues about the constitutional status of the Maori.

Until recently it was an accepted law of New Zealand politics that Maori affairs was a "third rail" issue - you touch it, you die - but the debate has been blown open in recent months, following a speech by opposition National party leader Don Brash claiming that the country was drifting towards racial separatism.

The speech, which critics attacked for stirring up prejudice against the Maori over a small number of culturally-specific social programmes, caused a remarkable spike in the National party's poll ratings, overtaking Helen Clark's Labour-led coalition and sending panic through the government.

These are murky waters, and the arguments about Maori affairs have created some strange bedfellows that don't line up easily into different flag camps. The ruling Labour party might be expected to be in favour of a change, but then so might Don Brash, who is anything but a kneejerk traditionalist.

Ironically enough, the most vocal supporter of the old colonial flag would likely turn out to be Winston Peters, the Maori leader of the New Zealand First party whose anti-immigrant rants have earned him a place in the hearts of local rednecks. The government depended on his support last week to pass a controversial bill about Maori ownership of New Zealand's foreshore and seabed.

You can only wish Morrison luck in casting off this imperial vestige, but he has clearly got a fight on his hands. With the verities of national politics thrown into such turmoil, no one wants to get into a damaging fight about which strip of cloth to hang outside parliament.

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Mark Ford - Speech

“When the well is dry is when we know the worth of water.”

Veronica introduces her fascinating book, *The Meaning of Water*, with that quote from Benjamin Franklin. Before the drought of 1994, we would have thought his warning didn't apply to water-wealthy New Zealand, and certainly not Auckland. We are not so dismissive now.

Veronica says that even in the most rained-upon nations, people are engaged in conflicts over water – who should own it, who should manage it, who should control it, who should profit from it. She says; “Nothing on earth, not even land is more contested”.

Sounds like Auckland in the 1990s. Water was the boiling issue. During the drought, politicians of all persuasions pointed fingers, cast aspersions and ran for cover or clambered onto the soapbox. Police, protesters, security guards, threats of sabotage – the sort of conflict that proves Veronica's point.

Watercare is a community-owned company, owned by six city and district councils – Waitakere, Auckland, Manukau, North Shore, Rodney and Papakura. Our job was to knuckle down and build facilities that not only met community demand but also gave residents a sense of security, that they would not face drought again.

The region now has a world class water treatment plant at Tuakau, and combined with our dams, provides 341 million litres of water a day to Aucklanders. We have also been upgrading existing treatment plants to provide water better than that demanded by New Zealand's tough water standards. We have also been sensitive to community preferences, where practicable.

For example, Waitakere City wanted water only from their local dams – so our engineers made it so. The Huia village community of about 480 people wanted their supply to remain unfluoridated, so instead of reticulating water from the main Huia treatment station – which is fluoridated - we are upgrading the village plant to treat water from a local source. And it is being fitted with the same membrane filters that has drawn the Tuakau plant to the attention of engineers around the world.

The region also needed better wastewater disposal, one that had much less environmental impact than the old Mangere oxidation ponds. Now Auckland has one of the world's most sophisticated wastewater treatment plants. I've heard it said that we've returned the Manukau harbour to its pre-60s condition, but thank god, we've done a lot better than that. In the 1950s, 26 million litres of trade waste and untreated sewage from tanneries, slaughterhouses and residential suburbs flowed each year into the harbour. The 1955 Noxious Fumes Inquiry noted that the air was bad enough to "blacken the paintwork of neighbouring houses". All that has changed. We have taken the harbour back to conditions more like those of the 1890s.

All this within the framework of Watercare reducing its wholesale water price in real terms since 1994. We have adopted pricing pressures to continue this as well as return earnings to our customers.

Aucklanders believe that our water problem is fixed. That attitude worries me. Already we are seeing slippage. Before the 1994 drought, regional consumption was 330 litres per person per day. The drought scared us into taking only 270 each a day. We are now using 300 litres. We are half way back to our old guzzling habits. If we stay at 300 litres each, taking into consideration expected population growth, we won't need another Waikato plant for around 30 years. But if we return to our pre-drought ways, we will need a whole new plant in only 15 years. Those plants are big money, and the longer we can hold off, the better. The more water we consume, the more wastewater we produce, the sooner we will need another wastewater treatment plant. Even bigger money. Millions and millions and millions.

New plant will not only cost us in cash, but it will cost us all personally in other ways. Every time we build a new treatment plant, a new dam, a new pipeline, a new pump station, people are affected. Lives are disrupted. Landscapes are changed. Communities are disturbed.

Mark Twain said that “whiskey is for drinking; water is for fighting over”. While I’m all for socking back the occasional whiskey, the time for fighting is over. We now have to face the future co-operatively. That’s why Watercare strongly supports the Auckland regional water management plan, to be published shortly.

Local authorities and their water businesses have banded together to find ways of saving water. They have accepted the need for a demand management strategy that will establish water savings targets, better performance measurements, and better planning and research. Our partners agree that we need to fix the stormwater overflows that confounds our wastewater treatment systems and continues to find its way into our harbours. And we agree to follow principles of sustainability, to preserve and even enhance our environmental assets.

What might this mean for residents and consumers? They might be encouraged to install roof-water tanks for shower and toilet cisterns. Kitchen and laundry water might be diverted to the garden or to wash the car. Already in some parts of the region, new property developments must have surge tanks to blunt the flash flood spikes that currently overload our stormwater systems.

Veronica says in her book that despite pleas from conservationists and water managers, populations the world over seem impervious to the reduce-use message. But I think Auckland is different. We got a hell of a scare, and despite some back-sliding, Aucklanders are still the most water thrifty in Australasia. I believe we can head off total relapse with better education.

Watercare already has a water education programme – our Adopt-a-Stream scheme reaches more than 150 schools. I want to build the scheme’s effectiveness, to expand it beyond the class room and into the broader community. There is no doubt in my mind that if we are to retain good quality raw water and so keeping future costs of treatment low, everyone must learn to respect our natural water sources and the catchments that feed them.

There's a really insightful comment in Veronica's book – that children know more about the Amazon than they do about the creek down the road from them. Kids may play in their stream and fish in it, but they don't really know much about it. Does concern about pollution of the Nile give them pause before shoving a shopping trolley into the Tararata creek in Mangere or pouring dad's left-over sump oil into Avondale's Whau river? I suggest the opposite is true – that by building an understanding of local creeks, we develop a world view of conservation issues.

We are committed to working with other local authorities that have their own water education programmes. Watercare would like to explore how we can link our respective programmes, complement each others' efforts, share resources, share knowledge, recreate awareness and get people to take action.

Veronica's book is a powerful reminder that even in a water-wealthy country such as New Zealand, we can't take for granted this most precious of resources. I recommend that anyone with an interest in Auckland's future, read it.