

Council

**Wednesday, 24 September 2008
Commencing at 5.30 pm**

REPORT OF THE MAYOR

This Mayoral report is respectfully dedicated to the undercover policeman Don Wilkinson of Waimauku who died tragically while fighting the scourge of P. His loss of life in the course of a just and honest battle is one the West knows a lot about. The killing of police strikes at the very heart of a decent society and it has significance in this case. I, like all of the region's Mayors have forwarded my condolences to the New Zealand Police on behalf of this council and I am hoping to attend the funeral at the time of writing this report. Our thoughts go to his family, friends and colleagues.

**SUPPLEMENT TO THE AGENDA FOR A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL TO BE HELD AT
WAITAKERE CENTRAL, 6 HENDERSON VALLEY ROAD, HENDERSON,
WAITAKERE, ON WEDNESDAY, 24 SEPTEMBER 2008,
COMMENCING AT 5.30 PM**

6 REPORT OF THE MAYOR

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council resolve to:

Receive the Report of the Mayor.

CALL FOR TOUGH ACTIONS AND EARLY INTERVENTION FOR AT RISK CHILDREN

The dialogue I initiated last month for urgent intervention to end the murder of young children in families has struck a powerful chord throughout the country.

Earlier this month I was asked to open the Every Child Counts conference in Wellington.

I had some strong words to deliver here as well, as it seems it is going to take people such as myself, and I might add, people such as the councillors of Waitakere, to stand up and say enough is enough.

I have had some productive discussions with John Tamihere at Te Whanau O Waipareira Trust, and we are aligned on what we see as some clear solutions to stem the tide of child abuse, that sees our very young and most vulnerable ones relentlessly thrashed, maimed and killed.

The only way forward is very early intervention to remove children from at risk families, and expose the perpetrators of these crimes against children and against society itself.

John and I see a way forward that involves the use of agencies that can provide a 'wrap around' and immediate hands on service, that can support, counsel, intervene and take direct actions across the board; rather than this continuing saga of government departments allowing people to fall between the cracks.

We have some great community services in Waitakere, and around the country, that do great work at the coal face directly with the communities in need. Not Work & Income New Zealand, not Wellington or Queen Street bureaucrats.

I don't think I went far enough in my comments, when I said we have to go out further on that so called limb. We have to have courage and we have to take people with us.

I think all New Zealand is cheering us on. There are a lot of models around to deal with shameful incidents of family violence. The Scandinavians have one and they seem to get it right.

We must make parenting a social, valuable, highly regarded and wonderful role. And in return this country, this nation, has to demand parents treat their children properly and if they don't, indeed they will feel the full weight of their neighbours and their community's wrath. Or the law will be brought to bear.



In other words, I think we just have to toughen up.

These families in trouble should also know that there are a huge number of organisations that will help and support them. We should ensure as a community, that we do not look away and close our ears to the cries and the screams from next door. We have to “call people out” if they won’t stop or won’t listen.

I need to ask as we have seen the lives of children lost, where were the parents, the families, the grandparents in all of this?

We are talking about naming and shaming builders who have built leaky homes in Auckland, isn’t **this** a bit more important than shonky buildings?

These biological parents, or caregivers or partners who have abused a child should, in my opinion, be judged unsuitable to be a parent again.

85 percent of brain development happens in the first three years and if we don’t do what we have to do in those three years, we will fail.

And pregnant woman must present for at least some ante-natal care for every delivery.

We must call for a national register of every child born in this country and track and account for their lives. And we in turn must ensure adequate funding to allow proper assessment and monitoring of the material child.

This is where we have to get smart. And this is where we are not delivering. We, as a society, need to understand a whole range of what I call the human smarts.

How the child will fit in with other children ? Is there material depression?

Is this family prone to violence? Are they marginalised? Is there substance abuse present or is there a history of it, of ‘P’, the whole damn lot ? Are there gangs involved? Is there dope and drug dealing going on?

Because that is what we are often talking about.

Do they need help? Let’s get it for them.

Let’s ‘wrap around’ these families with love, care and attention. Before it sounds like an episode of Outrageous Fortune, we need to know and we need to do something.

Somehow we continue to know what is going on, and we do nothing.

Every family needs to be aware that there are conditions to be met, programmes that are around for support and early intervention.

Midwives, and as you all know, I am married to one, know when a child should not be returned to a family, of course not in every case. Most cases are just fantastic. But when our judgement fails, then the Kahui twins go home to be murdered.

The privacy act fails us here. It blocks us from the truth and the reality and the possibilities. It stops us sharing information and it stops us thinking clearly.

We need to think carefully about whether our laws are putting individual’s civil liberties ahead of the welfare of our children.



A lot of failing families have been on benefits for two and three generations here in Waitakere. And here is the rub. If you get the dole, it must be to provide for food, warmth, clothing and rental. Fair enough. But if it isn't used for all of the above, you don't get the money. Your budget is managed for you.

You lose your independence.

Both John Tamihere and I know and believe that this needs to be spelt out, and there are people at a local level who can handle it. Because this problem lies as much in the hearts of the corridors of Wellington and the dingy government buildings of Queen Street as it does in our community.

For too long hand wringing professionals have been pontificating about solutions, writing papers, analysing data, forming policy, but never rolling up their sleeves and getting out there in our communities where it is happening.

This is where the real work is done; in our schools, in our homes, by hugely brave and terribly under-funded small groups, totally and utterly committed to their communities. The tragedy is they spend as much time fighting red tape and indifference as they do fighting the problem in the community.

We had the resources to round up the so called terrorists in Ruatoki, so don't tell me we can't resource getting to the heart of family violence and the disgusting way our children are being abused.

This must end. Intervention tools are needed more than ever; social workers in the schools spotting the children that are at risk. So many of our primary teachers have it. They all know the troubled kids and they know the troubled families.

In Waitakere there are around 140 families at the source of violence. From these families, which I would call dysfunctional, grows organised crime, distribution of drugs, and the children of these families become part of this dysfunctional mess. The police youth aid units know them intimately, I know them, and so does the Waipareira Trust. They are replicated throughout New Zealand.

The game is up. We can no longer tolerate their misuse of police, social and community time. We know how to fix it. It is not rocket science to fix. So why do we let it continue? It has to be a hard approach. If we don't go with this, the criminal justice system will continue to be the ambulance at the bottom of the cliff. And isn't it always the way in this country.

So therefore we need much more early home visiting, multi-disciplinary teams working together; parental rights need to be secondary to the rights of our young children. There needs to be a huge increase in the role of foster parenting in New Zealand. This needs to be matched by a national database to track the reliable parents. We need to further nurture loving and care, and we need to ensure the safety of our children.

We need 'wraparound services' to end disaffection and to stop families tipping into the tipping zone of no return. This is no time for silence. Silence betrays our children and betrays our future.



There is significant support from the research and academic community for my point of view. Subsequent speakers after me at the Every Child Counts conference elaborated on what I had to say. One keynote speaker, Professor Richie Poulton, supported my call for intervention. Professor Poulton is an eminent clinical psychologist at the University of Otago. He is the Director of the University of Otago's Dunedin Multidisciplinary Health and Development Research Unit which conducts the Dunedin Longitudinal Study, one of the most detailed studies of human health and development ever undertaken anywhere. So he knows from extensive 'hands on' research what is needed.

The media and public at large have been hugely supportive of my comments, so I am optimistic we are beginning a ground swell that will led to some direct action.

Youth Step Up

I spoke to an audience of more than 550 teens at the Trusts Stadium this month in a motivational rally called StepUP. If you've ever stood before an audience such as this, it is a daunting task, to motivate this number of teenagers in one hit. But it is so critically important for us to be there for our teens in the turmoil of their transition from child to adult. I know what is going on for our teens, and those that go off the rails are a major concern to us all. So it was with some trepidation that I stepped up to the podium and this challenge. I am delighted that I can report the event was a resounding success. The teens worked with 65 coaches and 57 volunteers and the organisers report they were really inspired to go out and be bold with their decisions about their lives. No mean feat. Nearly 4000 teens have now attended the StepUP programme throughout New Zealand, and organisers say 98 percent of attendees say the two day event is the best thing they have ever been to.

MILESTONES

Original Tui Glen Owner Dies

Colin Brookes, whose father Claude founded the Tui Glen Motor Camp, died last month at the age of 92. Colin took over from his Dad and managed Tui Glen for many years after the second world war before selling the camping ground to the Henderson Borough Council. Colin was a resident of Henderson for more than 80 years, only recently moving to Kerikeri with his wife May.

Colin followed his father's tradition of making Tui Glen a place of fun and respite for people all over Auckland.

His nephew, Dave Betts, recalls Tui Glen was ahead of its time, not only as we all know as New Zealand's first motor camp, but also for a state of the art children's playground, and games room including indoor bowls, penny slot machines, ping pong, and the sorts of holiday entertainment that became dear to New Zealanders in the 1940s, 50s, 60s and 70s.

The extended Brookes family have long and strong connections with the West with now just one family member living in the west, pastor Peter Brookes. Colin's brother in law, Eric Betts went on to found Betts Engineering in Te Atatu. He was an engineer at the Auckland soft drink company, Graham Menzies, in Eden Crescent, and went on to work at the neighbouring Innes Tartan soft drink manufacturer. Claude is remembered for taking his launch from Tui Glen down Henderson Creek and the Waitemata Harbour and onto downtown Auckland to work at the soft drink factory in Eden Crescent.



Last week, I joined the Governor General to open a new neurological rehabilitation centre at Tui Glen. It is so fitting that a place that has stood for people's wellbeing, a place historically dedicated to 'time out', will continue to be a contribution to the people of Auckland.

Chinese Moon Festival

This festival followed on one week later after The Festival of Cultures, that rather sad event which I comment on later in this report. Let me tell you this Moon Festival was an absolute stunner, a tribute to organisation and promotional skills. It was a great programme delivered and presented well. The Master of Ceremonies were the old team of Dai Bindoff and Audrey Chan resplendent in their Chinese outfits and what a good team they make. But what was exceptional was the huge number of people from the Asian community that made up the audience. The festival stretched out to the forecourt of the New Lynn Community Centre and it was a pity that the second stage wasn't given full use as it could have well been a back up for performers coming off the main stage in the hall. There is a problem with numbers. The community centre simply can't handle the audience that comes to the Moon Festival. Not only is it standing room only but the centre aisle is full of parents and children. I think the hall is too small and we need to think how we will handle this growing festival in our city. I am sorry more Councillors don't come. We always see Cr Judy Lawley and the New Lynn Community Board. This festival seems to fall off the councillors diary. It is a huge event for us and one to be supported. The performances are spectacular, beautiful and truly professional and they reflect Waitakere, New Zealand and New Lynn in the years ahead. I congratulate the organisers, the Cantonese Opera Society, Audrey and Peter Chan, the staff of Public Affairs and Dai Bindoff.

New Lynn Festival of Cultures

This is such a good idea and yet I was really disappointed in the way it was delivered. I think that this festival has true potential and I am urging the promoters of the trust to really start thinking in terms of a commitment to enriching our communities with the true potential of the cultures in the city. I turned up at 10 am to find a hall with 10 people. It seemed to me that something had gone seriously awry it got off the ground, or more limped off the ground after 10 with endless political speeches by Labour Party politicians and list candidates. There was no disguising that this was a Labour Party capture with their fans and friends as speakers and audience. It has got to be better than that. I am not hiding my own political affiliations either, but the communities and the cultures of the west deserve a little more affection and spirit; a rousing 'boo' and an ask for a serious more open, and more all encompassing look at this event in 2009.

An Excellent Year for the Waitemata Harbour Clean Up

M1-M5

Waitakere is a major funder for this fantastic service and I can't rave about it enough. I don't know what our streams and rivers would look like without them; they are really the marine version of the Graffiti Clean Up Trust. Last year Hayden Smith and I went up the Rosebank Peninsula where the Auckland mangroves touch the Whau. Behind the go-kart and speedway venue, we were stunned to see years of discarded tires. Well it took a couple of letters from me to the Avondale Community Board and to the organisers of the go kart operation and out came those tires. What a pile they make, two dump bins and a three meter high pile of tires. If you have any doubt where our money goes, please just study these photos. Hayden and I are going to have a look at the great Pacific garbage sink in the new year. You may have caught it on 60 Minutes. It is as big Texas, and that is big, and its sits in the middle of the Equator zone off Hawaii. Google it up if you want to be amazed to see where your last plastic bag that blew away went. You can also probably find a few of your parking tickets that have blown off your car and missed Rangitoto, where they usually finish up.



There are a couple of scientific projects around it on how it can be possibly dealt with, and the prognosis is not good. It seems like the planet may be stuck with this plastic junk floating disaster for the next five thousand years (see attachment pages M1 to M5).

Top Prize for the Team That Built Our Civic Centre

The people responsible for designing and building this wonderful building were recognised by their peers last month, receiving an Excellence Award from the New Zealand Institute of Building.

Council Project Manager, John Schermbrucker, and Nick Page from Canam Construction received the excellence award in the \$15 million to \$50 million project category. The winners were judged on a number of criteria and on the people and the team rather than simply the project itself. This is a great testament to John, his team, and this council's staff, particularly for their collaborative approach with contractors such as Canam. True and effective collaboration is the way of the modern world, and it is heartening to see our staff at the forefront.

Te Vaka Wins Again

2008 has been a great year for Te Vaka, with two top awards under their belt and last month their song, Tamahana, written by Opetai Foai and Malcolm Smith won the International category in the 28th Australian Songwriting Association Awards. The ceremony was held in Sydney and the winners performed their song to a sold out venue of top music industry personnel and Australian celebrities. Te Vaka's performance of Tamahana also won the group the PPCA 'best live performance of the night. Award.

A Fan Writes

M6

You will remember that at the last council meeting we made a couple of decisions around Maori representation, both on the council and in the wards. In the audience was one of the finest educationalists in Waitakere in the area of Maori recovery, Mere Tunks. I have enormous respect for her, a smart woman, of great compassion and understanding and someone who spends her life at the coal face of not only education but at courts, police and health issues. She was in the audience and she certainly was vocal during the debate. I thought you should read her letter as she is writing to the council of Waitakere and the representatives elected by the wards who saw fit to not include Māori in our future council. You should know how some people think and view your point of view (see attachment page M6).

News from the Trenches

A significant appointment that will make a great deal of difference to social services in Waitakere was announced this month. Michelle Barrowclough has been appointed as the chief executive of the Waitakere Abuse and Trauma Counselling Service. Michelle has worked in the health sector for more than 18 years; first as a registered nurse, and later in management roles with the Auckland District Health Board.



Getting the Real Oil at a Local Level

There are many local publications around that give us a real flavour of our local communities. They are important because they give us a real sense of neighbourhood and community. They are relevant because we recognise the names and places in them. One of the best around is the Tatler, run by Rene Bridges and Bevis England. For those of you who may not be aware, it has a circulation of just under 20,000 in and around Glen Eden, New Lynn, Titirangi, Green Bay and Kelston.

A regular columnist is our very own Councillor Lawley.

M7-M8

This month Judy contributed a column that I felt I we all should read (see attachment pages M7 to M8).

RA Harvey, QSO, JP
MAYOR OF WAITAKERE