

Lynne Pillay
MP for Waitakere

**WAITAKERE RANGES HERITAGE
AREA BILL**

2nd Reading

19 September 2007

I move, that the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area Bill be now read a second time.

I am delighted to move this local bill on behalf of the promoting councils - Waitakere City Council, the Auckland Regional Council and Rodney District Council. I warmly thank the councils for the privilege they have given me – to take charge of the Bill in this House – something I hold very dear. I introduced the Bill to the House in 2005, the purpose was to recognise the national significance of the Waitakere Ranges and foothills, and to promote the protection of their heritage features. I thank the Local Government and Environment Committee which carefully examined the bill and recommended that it be passed with amendments. I support that recommendation.

The amendments have significantly refined and improved the provisions of the bill. These changes result from the thorough consideration of over 200 submissions – by the Committee ably chaired by Steve Chadwick. I want to pay tribute to Steve and the Select Committee for their work on this bill and especially to those members who put politics aside and worked through the issues to ensure the Bill provides the best protection possible for the Waitakere Ranges. I also want to acknowledge advisors and staff from the councils, Parliament, Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Local Government, Ministry of Conservation, legal advisors and the Select Committee staff – their contribution has been invaluable.

The Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area is a nationally significant area of ecological, historical and cultural importance immediately adjoining the expanding international city that metropolitan Auckland has become. The intensity of the urbanisation pressures on public and private land is enormous, and unique in New Zealand. The Select Committee

accepted the need for further protection for this beautiful landscape from the adverse effects of urban growth and development. The bill contains urban Auckland so that it does become more compact and efficient, and sustainable, and protects the natural and cultural values of the Ranges and foothills.

But this is not blind protection-at-all-costs. The bill does not lock up the area and throw away the key. The heritage area will continue to be a lived-in, worked-in, and played-in place. A place with its own special communities and stunning diverse landscapes, a place separate from, but highly accessible to urban Auckland and to all who visit this wonderful land.

As the local member, I am proud that the Select Committee, has woven together the needs and interests of the social and economic wellbeing of the local communities with the wider national significance of the area, and the need for protection.

The heart of the heritage area is the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park. These high rugged, deeply dissected hills were originally acquired and set aside as a park to commemorate the first century of development as the Auckland Centennial Memorial park. The bill restates the management objectives for this now expanded parkland, to ensure the protection in perpetuity of the land and the values of the parkland.

But outside of the parkland, the heritage area includes 10,000 hectares of private land, home to some 22,000 people. Living on farmland, nestled in the bush and in coastal villages around our wild west coast beaches. The bill is innovative in its protection not just of the natural character, but of the distinctive bush dominated urban areas and the farming and rural character of the foothills to the east and north of the Ranges.

The bill introduces Local Area Plans which provide for the specific well-being of local communities within the heritage area. Local communities and councils will be able to establish a vision for the community's wellbeing and determine how the area should be managed. In one sense, this is common old-fashioned planning, but it is also an innovative location-specific means of working to a sure, long term goal, and a means of dealing with the difficult planning issue of cumulative effects.

The bill operates within a framework of existing legislation, particularly the Resource Management Act (RMA) 1991 and the Local Government Act 2002. The Select Committee has taken care to ensure that the provisions of the bill do not conflict with the RMA giving clarity, certainty and recognising the superior position of the RMA.

Some members of the National party have mischievously promoted the notion - out there in the community – that the bill will add costly layers and endless restrictions to the District plan. That is not the case, and it was never the intent; but the Select Committee has ensured that there will be no such confusion. A new clause ensures that the bill is interpreted, and implemented within the regime of the RMA. The bill will, in fact, ease some development and consenting processes, will reduce costs, will add to certainty of requirements and acceptable development. It may also reduce litigation by creating a more certain planning framework.

The National party has created a sense of fear and cynically traded on those fears. In reality, those fears are groundless. This Bill does not erode private property rights and it does not take any private land, rather it enhances the rights of the vast majority of residents who do not want to see ad hoc development. Development which was so appropriately described by the Commissioner of the Environment as ‘death by a thousand cuts’.

Mr Speaker - I am a proud resident within the boundaries of the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area which makes this Bill so special to me. So many have campaigned for so long, over decades in fact. I acknowledge the enormous contribution of Ngati Whatua, Kawerau a Maki, Rt Hon Jonathan Hunt, the Waitakere Ranges Protection Society, Forest and Bird and so many community groups and land owners. They love this land – they have contributed much to its history and they want to protect it for generations to come.

I commend the council’s strong leadership – Waitakere Mayor Bob Harvey, Auckland Regional Council Chair Mike Lee and Councillors Paul Walbran and Sandra Coney, Rodney Mayor John Law and all the Waitakere and Rodney Councillors and Community Board members who supported the Bill. And my friends and colleagues, David Cunliffe, Chris Carter, Dover Samuels and Darien Fenton. They like me are enthusiastic advocates for this Bill.

Mr Speaker this has been a long journey and today I celebrate what is for so many the realisation of a dream. It has been an honour to be part of this journey and it gives me great pleasure to commend the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area Bill to the House.
