



Paremata Residents Association

ANNUAL REPORT August 2023

Introduction

We started the financial year with high hopes for a year of major change with the opening of Transmission Gully Motorway in April 22. But following “consultation” by Waka Kotahi on the future of SH59, it soon became clear that major change was not going to happen quickly, if at all.

Submissions on the Porirua Proposed District Plan (PDP) were still being heard when further submissions were necessary after Porirua City Council (PCC) notified Variation 1 to the Plan, which changed housing density rules to comply with the Government’s national policy statement on urban design. Then there was consultation on options for PCC rates increase, City Parking and a Speed Management Plan.

So, once again, submissions and presentations was a key focus this year. However, your Association also advocated on various activities of interest or concern to residents, such as parking issues at Papakowhai primary school and kindergarten, the upgrade of Glengavel playground in Papakowhai, and changes to the Pascoe Avenue rail crossing and street parking.

More recently we have been updated on the planned Papakowhai Road shared path cycleway, and also become concerned about the impact on infrastructure (particularly wastewater) and lack of off-street parking from a multi-unit development proposed for 10/12 The Esplanade.

In addition, we endeavoured to achieve completion of our two Village Projects (more on this below).

Main Activities 2022 - 23

The Future of State Highway 59

Our request for the dangerous and divisive clearways through Mana Esplanade to be closed immediately, at least on a trial basis, was unfortunately ignored by Waka Kotahi (the NZ Transport Agency). After the opening of Transmission Gully Motorway (TGM), it was clear that the volume of traffic through the Esplanade and St Andrews Road at peak times only required a single lane in each direction.

Our own observations, and traffic monitoring data eventually provided by Waka Kotahi, confirmed that too many vehicles (including heavy trucks) were still using the kerbside lanes outside of clearway hours and high traffic speeds on the Esplanade and St Andrews Road were being recorded. Disappointing, but as expected, the number of heavy trucks taking the SH59 route to Wellington rather than TGM gradually increased.

Closing the clearways would have immediately improved traffic and pedestrian safety, in addition to confirming the need for only a single lane and discouraging the use of SH59 rather than TGM. But the benefits of this sensible and simple action have been lost.

Waka Kotahi decided to start its requirement to consult on the future of SH59 with the Paremata and Plimmerton Residents Associations, PCC, Greater Wellington and Ngati Toa Rangatira, towards the end of January 23. The “consultation” on the 10 items involved, consisted of Waka Kotahi telling us there would be no change considered on anything until a strategic plan was prepared sometime in the next few years.

All parties were given 4 weeks to formally respond to this “consultation”. Subsequently Waka Kotahi issued their consultation report and confirmed their decision to do nothing immediately, despite all formal submitters identifying items needing immediate attention, and both local authorities wanting fast action to improve safety and reduce road overcapacity.

Adding to the frustration, a Road Safety Audit of SH58 and SH59 that Waka Kotahi had previously said would be necessary to aid consultation, was not made available to the consulting parties until after the consultation report was issued. The audit (which has not been publicised by Waka Kotahi but can be viewed on the Association’s website paremataresidents.co.nz) clearly identifies safety concerns associated with Mana Esplanade, the clearways, and St Andrews Road.

Currently we are waiting for confirmation that PCC and Waka Kotahi have agreed the terms of reference for, or actually started, the SH59 strategic plan. In the meantime, this stretch of road remains dangerous, and vehicles continue to use the clearway lanes whether open or not – apparently oblivious to the expected buffering role of the clearways and continuing to make legal parking unattractive for residents and visitors.

You may remember that last year I mentioned our complaint to the Ombudsman about difficulties in communication with Waka Kotahi (even with requests made under the Official Information Act), failure to honour previous commitments and unwillingness to enforce designation conditions. We recently updated our complaint to the Ombudsman to include our concerns about Waka Kotahi’s “consultation” and inaction on safety concerns raised by submitters and the Safety Audit report. To date the complaint has still not been assigned for investigation and we are told it is not a priority.

PCC Proposed District Plan & Variation 1

At the beginning of our financial year the Council notified Variation 1 to the PDP with changes to housing height and density, and rules to comply with their interpretation of the Government’s new policy statement on urban development. Your Association lodged additional submissions covering the negative impacts of these extreme changes.

So, even before hearings on the original plan were completed, the Hearings Panel was required to also consider these new and radical changes. Council was granted an extension to 20 August 23 to notify their decision on the PDP, including Variation 1.

Our submissions questioned the wisdom of multi-storey buildings on low lying land vulnerable to sea-level rise, liquefaction, tsunami and within/close to the Ohariu earthquake zone. We submitted on needing a practical definition of “walkable distance” that considered steep uphill roads, and also the impact of higher density housing on already overloaded stormwater and wastewater systems.

Hearings were completed by the end of March 23. Whether the Hearings Panel will recommend any changes to Council, and Council moderate the PDP to offset any of our concerns remains to be seen.

“Meet the Candidates” Meeting

Last September, the Paremata Residents Association organised a meeting in Ngati Toa Domain Hall for local residents (assisted by Plimmerton Residents Association) to hear presentations from candidates for the Local Body Elections. This included candidates for Mayor, Pauatahanui General Ward, Parirua Maori Ward, and Greater Wellington Tawa-Porirua Ward.

The meeting was very well attended and all but one candidate standing for election made a presentation. The feedback from both candidates and residents was very positive.

Village Projects

Village Planning Programme

The village planning programme remained “paused” this financial year, with no funding for new projects and a requirement to complete existing projects this year or risk loss of allocated funds. We are hopeful that a modified version of the village planning funding model will resume next financial year.

- ***Dolly Varden Foreshore Erosion Control***

As reported last year, village funding constraints meant we needed to scale back the scope of the erosion control project and focus on one area where the reduced funding would provide significant benefit. The existing walking path from the Foreshore down to the beach and the narrow Foreshore path above it, were identified as needing safety improvement.

Parks staff have used the village project funding to widen the Foreshore path around the top, widen, re-shape and gravel the access path to the beach, including concrete plinth onto the beach, and plant the area with natives.

The result is a safer and more accessible path to the beach. The only disappointing aspect of this upgrade was the determination of Parks managers to remove, and plant, the regularly used northern access path to the beach despite our pleas for it to be retained.

Parks staff also intend to carry out maintenance on other reserve vegetation, the existing timber wave wall, and the area in front of the wooden steps by the toilet block. Another improvement being considered is the replacement of picnic tables along the reserve.

- ***Ngati Toa Domain Heritage Trail***

Last year we had the target to complete the Heritage Trail in time for a Matariki celebration, but it wasn't achieved. This year we had the same target, but again it hasn't been achieved. So how far have we got?

History board locations are agreed and the frames for these constructed, Archaeological Authority approval for the locations has been received. The English text for the boards was originally approved by ourselves and Ngati Toa Rangatira, but later changed substantially. The Te Reo translation of the text has only recently been completed by the Dept of Internal Affairs.

The focus has now turned to the layout and graphics for the history boards, followed by production of the history boards and installation at the approved locations. At last, I now feel we will soon complete this long running project.

Local Issues

Aotea Lagoon Duck Pond

The Paremata Residents Association has been lobbying PCC for action to clean up the contaminated Duck Pond for the last few years without success. Instead, the Council decided to remove it altogether. After a very wet period, when it took much longer than expected to dewater and backfill, the area is now filled and traversed by a stormwater stream through to the lagoon.

When the ground has settled, the Council intends to landscape and perhaps provide further recreational activities on this area.

Glengavel Playground Upgrade

The Association liaised with PCC on its plan to upgrade the playground facilities. We provided information about the upgrade on our Facebook page, including on-site sessions for local residents to view plans and discuss alternatives. The input from residents was received positively by Council and I understand the upgrade has now been completed.

Dolly Varden Foreshore Barrier, Rabbits, Swans and Geese

Over many years of discussions with PCC Parks managers, we have argued that restricting vehicle access to the foreshore reserve and beach at Dolly Varden was unnecessary, but it became increasingly clear that Parks were intent on installing a barrier across the unnamed access lane leading from Mana Esplanade. As a result, a row of bollards and a barrier arm were installed last winter to deter vehicles from driving on the reserve, particularly when the ground is wet. The barrier arm is not locked, maintaining access for both adjoining residents and the general public whenever it is really needed.

Over summer black swans again returned to the Inlet in large numbers to feed on the sea grass. The swans become a real nuisance when they migrate to the foreshore and foul the beach and grassed areas, especially at spring tides. However, we are told that there is little that can be done. Numbers of Canada geese on the Inlet waters also increased immensely this year. It would appear, however, that nobody is willing to take responsibility for managing Canada geese – GWRC, for instance, told us that the geese do not meet the threshold for a pest of regional significance and therefore cannot be listed in its Regional Pest Management Plan.

Rabbits continue to be a pest on the foreshore reserve, but control options are limited since it is a public area. Bait traps on adjoining properties have had limited effect and the results of a control programme undertaken for the Council over several nights in late April will probably not become clear until the coming summer.

Tweed Ave Chorus Cabinet Mural

Chorus is partnering with PCC to paint murals on the Chorus roadside cabinets. This year the Tweed Road cabinet in Papakowhai was chosen for painting and local artists were invited to submit designs and the Association was given the task of deciding which of the two designs submitted to recommend. So, we asked immediate neighbours for their preference. The design marginally preferred was a whale scene, which has been painted and brightens up the previously dull looking cabinet (just some tidying up work to be completed).

The next Chorus cabinet to receive a mural is outside the Mobil service station on Paremata Crescent. We wait with interest to see what ideas are offered this time.

Papakowhai Road Cycleway and Whitford Brown Intersection

The Association's last committee meeting received a presentation from the PCC project managers on the planned new shared path cycleway from Whitford Brown Avenue to the existing pedestrian bridge over SH59 to Paremata railway station. The work has been funded by Waka Kotahi as part of their national cycleway project but needs to be completed by the end of June 24.

As a result, the Whitford Brown/Papakowhai Road intersection upgrade will be delayed until this new wider path, and changes at road intersections along the route, is completed. The future plan (subject to funding – preferably from Waka Kotahi) is to replace the two existing pedestrian bridges over SH59 with a new pedestrian and cycle overbridge. This will provide a safer walking/cycling route through the Paremata area.

Proposed Multi-Unit Development 10 and 12 The Esplanade

We have been advised that an apartment block containing 36 residential apartments is proposed to be constructed at 10 and 12 Mana Esplanade, mainly single bedroom and some two bedrooms and 3 storeys. Nearby residents and the Paremata Residents Association are very concerned that such a development will have a substantial additional wastewater load on our already over-loaded sewers along the Esplanade, increasing the current surface discharges in wet weather, and more contamination of the Inlet. Similar concerns apply to stormwater resulting from much greater coverage of hard surfaces.

We are also concerned that the shortage of off-street parking spaces proposed by the development (8 parking spaces for 36 apartments!) will lead to the loss of available parking at the adjacent Dolly Varden carpark, nearby boat launching and recreational areas, and neighbouring streets – impacting on recreational users, residents and their visitors, and local businesses. Possible adverse effects on the use of the adjacent foreshore reserve are also an important factor.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the Executive Committee for their input this year that enabled your Association to continue representing the residents of Papakowhai, Paremata, Mana and the southern part of Camborne. The current committee includes:

Vice President	Russell Morrison
Treasurer	Francesse Middleton
Secretary	Frank Moes
Social Media	Coralie Morrison
Committee	Ian Barlow, Lorraine Taylor, Mark Morrison, Luke Waghorn

Unfortunately, we are about to lose the services of Francesse Middleton as she and husband Adrian are moving north. Adrian joined the committee in the mid-1990s before Francesse took over in about 2005. She has been our honorary treasurer for the last 5 years. Francesse's enthusiasm to help out will really be missed.

We were sad to learn of the recent death of Paul Crisp who served on the Association's executive committee for more than 25 years before ill health forced his resignation in 2018. For many of those years he was the Association's honorary treasurer. Paul was particularly valuable in analysing data and reports, and became an expert in undertaking traffic counts.

We were also sad to lose the wise advice and hard work carried out by Geoff Neill when he and partner Pat moved south last year after about 14 years on the committee. Geoff's knowledge and skill in negotiating with various agencies was invaluable.

I want to recognise the involvement of Nathan Waddle (Pāuatahanui General Ward Councillor) and Chris Kirk-Burnnand (Greater Wellington Councillor) for their representation and input at our committee meetings.

In addition, Bill Inge (PCC Village Planning) continues to provide valuable assistance with our village projects and has been essential for on-going liaison with Council department staff.

And finally, but certainly not least, our thanks go to Euon Murrell and Tommy's Real Estate for ongoing support with the printing and supply of newsletters and leaflets.

Tony Shaw

President, Paremata Residents Association