

## **KRRR Chairmans Report 2025**

I probably feel the same as many other KRRR chairs have felt before me. There are several dimensions to being on the KRRR committee, but I see that our principal role is to champion the values of our community and to lobby our local, regional and, at times this year, national government to do the right thing by our community.

The committee doesn't decide these values, they are defined in the various community surveys undertaken over the years. This is the lens we use to focus our actions and priorities.

It is, sadly, hard to make progress, a challenge I am sure previous chairs and committees have felt. Victories are not frequent, but we still feel it is important that we represent our views and push for changes. It is difficult at times to not get frustrated or disappointed.

If, however, as a community and as individuals in our community, we keep quiet then we know nothing will change so we need to push to achieve results. We do need to remain respectful and civil in this process. Our frustration lies with the system and not with individuals to whom we direct our dialogue.

A submission was made on the TCDC Long Term Plan by the previous committee with two of our committee members appearing at the hearing in April 2024 in support of the submission. The submission focused on proposed rate rises, budgets for footpaths and cycleways, cyclone recovery work, connectivity between Kuaotunu & Matarangi, traffic speeds, a request for a refresh of the community plan and concerns regarding a proposed \$280,000 to upgrade the Blackjack toilets. We remain opposed to an expensive full upgrade of the Blackjack toilets whilst other more urgent issues are outstanding requiring funding.

Past goals to lobby for safer and completed footpaths connecting our communities along SH25 was thwarted by Waka Kotahi / NZTA when the coalition Government decided footpaths and pedestrian cycleways in NZ were no longer necessary and budgets were slashed accordingly. Regardless, we will continue to pursue this goal of connecting the partial footpaths that direct pedestrians and cyclists off formed footpaths onto a busy state highway with narrow, collapsing verges is both foolhardy and dangerous. Our community and visitors deserve the right to have safe pedestrian or cycling connections between our settlements.

Another objective of the KRRR was to achieve a lower speed limit on the State Highway from Hilldale Crescent to Cemetery Road. This was setback when Waka Kotahi / NZTA decided (without consultation with our community) to reverse the temporary restrictions throughout NZ including on SH25. This increased the speed limits from 50Kmph to 70Kmph in these areas. To counter this ill-conceived

decision, we made direct contact with Andrew Corkill, Community Relations Manager - Waikato Waka Kotahi / NZTA, and he has advised us on proposed speed restriction consultations with communities on the SH25 network. To help us substantiate our community support for the lowering of speed limits we have completed a fresh survey of residents, ratepayers & visitors on lowering the speed limit back from 70 Kmph to 50 Kmph along SH25 through our coastal village. The result was overwhelming with 98% (350) for and 2% (6) against. We look forward to consulting directly with Waka Kotahi / NZTA on our communities' behalf and achieving a positive outcome.

There has been progress on the connectivity issues on Bluff Road between Rings Beach and Matarangi with a feasibility study for a suspension bridge being funded by the Matarangi Residents & Ratepayers Association and supported by the Kuaotunu Residents & Ratepayers Association. We continue to provide technical support on this concept through KRRRA committee member Kevin Crawford who has given a significant amount of his free time tirelessly to achieve this safe connection for pedestrians and cyclists.

The committee made a written submission in opposition to the Governments Fast Track Bill. The principal reason for this was that it would remove our community's voice, and the voice of local and regional government, on development projects that could directly affect our community.

For example, this bill would allow gold mining, development and forestry (risking silt runoff, roading and environmental degradation etc) to be undertaken without any consultation with communities. Previous community surveys by KRRRA prioritised opposition to gold mining (94%), unsuitable development (96%) and degraded water quality (96%) therefore we were satisfied we had a mandate to oppose the bill. Two members (Ian & Kevin) addressed the Environment Select Committee on our submission.

Residents living in Cemetery Road and Waitaia Road contacted the KRRRA concerned about a 9-lot subdivision being proposed for bare land on Cemetery Road adjacent to the Waitaia River. The committee agreed to contact TCDC on this matter and advocate against the proposal due to the lack of detailed information in the application mitigating the effects of flooding, traffic issues on SH25 and downstream effects on water quality. We have requested that the proposal be publicly notified. TCDC have issued a detailed Request for Information from the applicant which would address a number of residents concerns.

In June the KRRRA wrote in support of an application by Ngati Hei to MPI for an extension to the scallop rahui. The application was also supported by the Opito & Otama Ratepayers Associations.

In October a clean-up of beaches, reserves and road verges was undertaken by our community including committee members. We appreciated the co-ordination of

this event by Nedilka Radojkovich, the volunteers and the (unnamed) couple who were up at dawn on two mornings to clean up the rubbish on state highway 25 from the Whauwhau Road through to Stargazers. This stretch of road was by far the worst for roadside rubbish. We appreciated the support from TCDC to drop the litter to the refuse station at no cost.

The committee has formulated a process to receive and decide on community funding requests being made to KRRRA. During the past year the committee received and approved funding requests from the Rings Beach Wetland Group (\$500 for track maintenance tools), in early April we approved \$500 to Kuaotunu Dune Care for native trees, Kuaotunu Fire & Emergency was granted \$255 for EPI Pens, we donated to the Kuaotunu Fire & Emergency Firefighters Social Fund (\$1000 in recognition of the Blackjack Fire effort by the firefighters).

While we are here to advocate on behalf of our residents and ratepayers on issues of shared concern, we ask that members first contact the relevant authorities and then contact a committee member if the response is not satisfactory. You can also bring concerns to our committee meetings as we set aside a 10-minute time slot at the start of meetings to hear from the community on matters of concern. We only ask that you give us at least 48 hours' notice if you intend to attend our public forum.

There are other issues on our radar such as the problem of campervans occupying the boat ramp carpark in the early morning forcing more vehicles & boat trailers to park on the state highway, a cyclone storm damaged culvert collapse damaging sand dunes between Greys Ave and Cuvier Crescent, a proposed hui along the Blackjack coast to protect the reef system being destroyed by excessive kina due to the lack of kina predators, Fast Track applications that may affect Kuaotunu - pine extraction using the Waitaia Road and Oceana Gold mining activities, community emergency events preparation, annual litter clean up's, long term traffic calming through the village and Kuaotunu River foot bridge structure replacements.

The KRRRA will also be providing feedback to TCDC who are proposing changes to the summer kerbside collections and are consulting on The Three Waters Done Well programme (infrastructure management of freshwater, stormwater and sewage). We encourage residents & ratepayers to also consider reading more on these proposals and making a submission.

You may have noticed the noticeboard outside the Kuaotunu store has had a refreshing paint job and a new layout. A big thank you to Isabel & Gael for your work on the noticeboard and keeping it well managed. It is an important information asset for our community and visitors.

The KRRRA has a strong relationship with other ratepayer associations along our coastline including Whangapoua, Matarangi, Otama & Opito groups. The chairs of

these groups meet quarterly with the Mercury Bay Community Board, local Councillors and TCDC staff to discuss any issues of concern.

We have appreciated open, trustworthy and frequent dialogue with the TCDC Mayor Len Salt who has endeavoured to assist on many of our issues. We also appreciated open discussions, informative communications and support from our TCDC Councillors and TCDC staff with special thanks to Heather Bruce, Brian Taylor and Dean Allen. We may not always get the results we want but at least they do listen. The TCDC reserves team deserve a special note of appreciation for the open communication and the great mahi you have done to support our local community groups caring for our special coastal environment and keeping our reserves in good order.

In closing a very big thank you to the committee who have worked hard throughout the year. A very massive kudos to our Deputy Chair, Ian Preece for a huge effort during the past year taking on a substantial workload on many issues including coordinating the newsletter, managing our website, undertaking Mailchimp communications, coordinating surveys, organising the AGM and assisting with the never ending emails dealing with KRRRA business. I hope that the next committee will seek to share much of this workload.

My appreciation also goes to our Secretary Kevin Crawford who ensures our meetings were well recorded, provides us with technical expertise on roading issues and who continues to relentlessly and passionately pursue issues that are central to the heart of our community.

I appreciate the opportunity to have chaired the 2024/25 committee.

Tēnā koutou katoa.

Steve Hart

Chair - Kuaotunu Residents & Ratepayer Association