**Submission on Proposed Site for New Huia Water Treatment Plant, Waitakere Ranges**

**From: Titirangi Residents & Ratepayers Association**

**Date:** 6 March 2017

**Contact:** Dr Mels Barton, Chair

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This submission is made by The Titirangi Residents and Ratepayers Association, a non-profit incorporated society formed in 1987 to promote and represent the interests of ratepayers and residents in the Titirangi area. The Association can be traced back to the 1920s when an unincorporated society is recorded as lobbying Council regarding roads.

**The Association’s position is that the new water treatment plant should be located on the Manuka Rd site, however we will not consider the location of a new plant in Titirangi acceptable unless the future of Exhibition Drive as a publicly owned and publicly accessible asset in perpetuity is guaranteed in writing by Watercare and Auckland Council.**

**1. Confirmation that Titirangi sites will not require additional properties**

We would like to receive confirmation in writing that no additional properties will be required in order to locate the treatment plant on either the Manuka Rd site or the existing treatment plant site.

**2. Clark’s Bush**

We would like to receive confirmation in writing that the treatment plant if located on either the Manuka Rd or the existing site will not encroach onto the public reserve known as Clark’s Bush, located on Manuka Rd. This reserve contains a number of kauri trees that were never logged and are probably over 1000 years old.

**2. Need for survey for rare plants and animal/bird life and historical/archaeological features**

We require an urgent independent ecological and historical / archaeological assessment of both the Manuka Rd site and the existing site to be done to establish whether rare and endangered species and archaeological sites are present and if so exactly where they are located within the sites. These surveys should involve members of the Auckland Botanical Society and iwi as well as an independent ecologist. The reports should be provided to the public via the Watercare website before the public submission phase of the project ends so that further submissions can be made in the light of their findings.

**3. Future of Exhibition Drive**

Exhibition Drive is the most popular walking track in the Waitakere Ranges, used daily by many hundreds of Titirangi residents. It has been an essential piece of local infrastructure for over 100 years. It’s development as a “drive” would never have been achieved had it not been for the continued lobbying and donations of land by Titirangi residents over 100 years ago. Watercare is merely the caretaker of this piece of land on behalf of the ratepayers and residents of Auckland. Watercare did not purchase Exhibition Drive and should it wish to divest the land it should be donated to Auckland Council and retained as part of the Regional Park with public access in perpetuity. No other future for Exhibition Drive is considered acceptable by this Association and we consider it an integral part of the decision making regarding the site for the new water treatment plant. **We will not consider the location of a new plant in Titirangi acceptable unless the future of Exhibition Drive as a publicly owned and publicly accessible asset in perpetuity is guaranteed in writing by Watercare and Auckland Council.** The land must be gazetted and become part of the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park and therefore subject to the Regional Parks Management Plan.

**4. Use of historic buildings**

We consider that the historic buildings both on the existing treatment plant site and across the road on Exhibition Drive should be restored and put to public use as part of this project. The current demolition by neglect of the old treatment plant by Watercare is a disgrace and totally unacceptable. The future use of these buildings needs to be the subject of a separate and significant public consultation.

**5. Sensitive and adaptive design**

Whichever site is chosen must have a layout and design that is sensitive to avoiding and retaining the best quality vegetation and any other natural assets or historical/archaeological features as much as is technically feasible. Avoiding visual and noise impact on local residents is an essential consideration in the layout and design of the site. Retaining vegetation around the boundaries of the site to reduce the visual impact should also be considered essential.

**6. Communications and compensation**

This Association considers it outrageous that Watercare would consider putting residents in Oratia out of their homes when they have 2 sites in Titirangi that they can use for the treatment plant instead. The stress and anxiety caused to the Oratia community to date is totally unacceptable and a public apology and appropriate compensation should be made to that community by the Board of Watercare Services Ltd. The people of Oratia should be allowed to determine what form that compensation should take. This Association would like to make it clear that our representative on the Stakeholder Working Group strongly recommended to Watercare representatives on 6 Dec 2016, when they were first informed of the location of the 3 shortlisted sites, that they immediately contact the Oratia community and provided them with the contact details for the Oratia R&R Association. We are disgusted that members of the Titirangi community have been publicly accused of trying to divert the treatment plant to Oratia because Watercare’s communications with the public has been so inadequate and that advice from our representative was not heeded by Watercare. We consider that the communities of both Oratia and Titirangi deserve a public apology and statement regarding the decision making process for the 3 shortlisted sites to make it clear that the Stakeholder Working Group members were not involved in any way in selecting those sites, nor were they informed of the location of any of the sites on the Long List before 6 Dec 2016. It was not the obligation of the members of the Stakeholder Working Group to undertake Watercare’s public communication on their behalf.

**7. Which site**

With the proviso as stated above in 3. that **the future of Exhibition Drive as a publicly owned and publicly accessible asset in perpetuity is guaranteed in writing by Watercare and Auckland Council** this Association considers that the Manuka Rd site is the most suitable of the 3 shortlisted sites. People should not be put out of their homes in Oratia in exchange for trees in Titirangi, this is a ludicrous proposal. However the best quality vegetation on the site should be avoided and protected in perpetuity if at all technically possible by sensitive design.