

Panel Address Oakura Development

Rowan Oldfield

Good afternoon panel

My name is Rowan Oldfield and I have come 13,489km to be here today. Why 13,489km's you may ask? Well that is the distance that my family and I traveled from the UK 20 years ago to settle in Oakura. Why Oakura when we had the potential to live in Europe, Australia, USA and Canada; we chose Oakura because of the community and the special character that exists within it. To convey that special character to you now is not easy but I will attempt to do that for you. The village is an extraordinary melting pot of nationalities combining together to create a cohesive, functioning unit. The sight of children walking alone barefooted about the village is not uncommon and the sense of safety that exists within the village is palpable. The beach of course is a major attraction for all and is used throughout the year as is the heart of the village slowly developing into a successful commercial centre where families and individuals regularly gather to catch up and hang out by the 4 Square or cafes. The natural beauty is stunning with the Kaitake ranges providing native bush with walking tracks and the surrounding undeveloped rural land combines to create what can only be described as a quintessentially New Zealand coastal village. The land proposed for the development is a beautiful addition to the landscape of Oakura, providing a gently rolling vividly green blanket approach to the stunning National Park. To think that this land might possibly be permanently modified for the financial benefit of a few individuals is staggering.

I am a school teacher with 18 years experience across 3 countries and I can tell you that the pressures within a school to accommodate students within classrooms is a very real issue; not only for the young learner but for those expected to deliver and manage a learning environment. This proposal will utterly change the dynamics of the school and as most living within the proposed development will drive their tamariki to school the congestion which is already considerable; will become unbearable. I can see the school from my house and hear the fire alarm when it goes, there are already distinct times of the day that I can not effectively move from my home due to the congestion of the school run. I can only perceive that if this proposal were to go ahead, this problem would indeed become even more of an issue for myself and those living nearby.

It has been interesting to have read and listened to the proposal with the various sides offering their pluses and minuses on the issue over what seems like a considerable length of time. I have used this exact situation with various classes at a secondary school in New Plymouth where I work as an exercise in decision making; being a geography teacher I could not have asked for a better lesson plan complete with various expert reports to land in my lap. I wish to thank the McKie team of experts for creating this wonderful resource; in doing so you have saved me hundreds of hours and considerable expense so that I can now spend that time with my family enjoying the wonderful natural environment and views as we

walk up Wairau Rd looking out over the rural land towards the sea and on into the National Park. The students are given the opportunity to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the proposed development and the responses are very interesting. Overwhelmingly the students (14-18 yrs old) choose to reject the development with justification based upon the environment and the negative in-pact on the residents quality of life including but not limited to road congestion, pollution (runoff into the waterways, light and noise), loss of natural habitat, overcrowding of facilities such as parking provision, school etc . There is however a twist in the tail of this lesson. If the exact same lesson is delivered but this time the students are given a role such as land owner, lawyer, school teacher, council member, long term resident, local farmer, builder, property speculator etc etc the outcomes are very different. We as teachers and parents try our absolute best in not only providing access to knowledge, learning opportunities and experiences but more importantly we all want our children and young people do develop values that focus upon what is right and just. To be able to place others needs above our own at times ~~selfish~~ desires. We expect our young people to be able to share, to not adversely affect others by their actions, to think of others to show empathy and understanding; it has been very difficult to explain and justify what is being proposed in these terms to our young community members and if the development goes ahead I for one would struggle to explain how this decision came to be. No longer does it wash to just fob off our future leaders of the country with the line " it's complicated, adult stuff ". It is not complicated at all, it appears to many to be very straight forward; to use a parlance of our time "it's a no brainer' clearly not needed and not wanted.

I have been a member of the volunteer fire brigade in Oakura for 14 years and have been involved in some major events that have affected the village such as the tornado in July 2007. It is during these events that you truly get to see the heart and soul of the community. The way people share a common goal; to help and support neighbours; to have faith in others to do the right thing for those unable to help themselves. The community shines its brightest in the darkest of times; and as should be glaringly apparent from listening to those standing before you this week; this proposal is indeed a looming threatening darkness the magnitude of which we have never seen before. I struggle to find any benefits as there is already sufficient land allocation on the seaward side of the highway and with the spaces available within the village itself to satisfy any projected demand. I therefore request that the panel reject the proposal in its entirety and clearly signal to our young people growing up in a community that considered reasoning and the combined will of a community can make a difference. That the will and needs of those living in such a community can, with the tools of honesty and integrity win through, ~~that greed and selfishness will not triumph.~~ I would like to finish with a whakatauki that I believe sums up what I have tried to say today and it is this:

He aha te mea nui o te ao. He tāngata, he tāngata, he tāngata

What is the most important thing in the world? It is people, it is people, it is people.

Thank you