

My name is Peta Bisset Hislop. I am 73 years old and have two wonderful daughters and three very special grandchildren. I have been a resident of Oākura on and off since 1951 when my parents bought a cottage in the Keyhole Reserve, which is still owned by our family. I live in the village, in the same house my husband and I built 47 years ago. We spend a lot of time on the beach and in the community's parks and reserves around the village. Oākura, its residents and its environs are very close to my heart.

I was very fortunate to be a teacher at Oākura School for thirty years. I have taught a succession of local children and have taught the children of many of those I taught in earlier years. I have even taught quite a few grandchildren of my first pupils.

This has provided me with a special connection to the Oākura community and has enriched my life in our picturesque and much loved village.

I have also been part of the school as it has grown, and have seen that growth managed very well over the years. The school is a special place and provides much of the 'glue' that connects the community together. Through its children and the involvement of their parents in school activities, our residents are connected socially to each other in a way that larger communities cannot do.

We are extremely lucky to have such a well managed and happy school. The children here grow into great people who become real assets for the community and further afield in later years. I believe their early school years have added much value to each and every one of them.

Oākura School has always operated as a close-knit community where each family has a genuine stake in it. There has always been a great sense of unity, especially as the goals are shared by the parents and teachers alike. There is much parent involvement and a feeling of belonging has been central to the school's success over the years.

The school is at its maximum number now and can in no way absorb the number of children that space would have to be found for should the subdivision go ahead. It would prove a real disaster if we lost our beautiful green space at school where the children play and interact so happily. In order to accommodate the large numbers of extra students generated by the proposed subdivision our play spaces would be covered with extra classrooms and concrete.

For many of my years at school I did road patrol on the main road to ensure that the children coming and going from school crossed safely. In more recent years I, along with other staff members, witnessed near accidents with motorists travelling too fast or barely stopping when the road patrol signs went out. Since I have retired from the school there has been a massive increase in the volume of traffic through our village. Many cars are travelling well above the speed limit as they rush to get to their destinations.

The further increase in the volume of traffic if the subdivision went ahead would make it even more dangerous for everyone crossing the road, especially for our little people. Parking is much more congested up at the shops these days and in summer it can be nearly impossible to find a park at the beach.

All the locals, like me, live with the reality that we live in a popular and special place. That does bring lots of visitors and new residents. However our unique place will only remain so if the community has a say in how its growth is managed. If that doesn't happen, we will end up ruining the very reasons so many people love Oākura as much as our family does.

Peta B Hislop 21/7/19