

Jims/aquarium

**WELLINGTON RECREATIONAL MARINE FISHERS
ASSOCIATION
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NEWLANDS**

20th June 2004

Ms Kerry Prendergast
Mayor of Wellington City
P O Box 2199
WELLINGTON

Ms Fran Wilde
Chairperson
Wellington Waterfront Limited
P O Box 2199
WELLINGTON

Dear Kerry and Fran

With the authority of the Committee of the Wellington Recreational Marine Fishers and the knowledge of a number of environmental groups who have all encouraged me to present this vision for our waterfront and south coast, I ask, why are we not getting a decent sized marine aquarium, say at Taranaki Street Wharf? Why pour money into a marine complex on one of the most exposed points on the Wellington South Coast that can only be accessed by vehicles and visited on fine days?

You have built for Wellington some impressive complexes at Te Papa, The Stadium, Events Centre, Maritime Museum and the Michael Fowler Centre and they all attract visitors for often only a two-hour event. These visitors arrive, some times a day early, and then walk around town with their hands in their pockets looking at shops, while waiting for the game or concert. If you could organise the building of a massive marine complex similar in design to Sydney's we could induce them to part with some more of their money and they would help pay for it. It has been researched that one in three New Zealanders go fishing and as such a large number of these visitors will have participated in this recreation as well.

We know from organising fishing competitions there is a tremendous interest in the fish we catch off our coasts. However, it is my belief that a marine complex of the future has to be special and unique, and not just another marine aquarium. We cannot afford to have one that people refer to as the same

as Auckland's or Napier's. Like our other attractions it has to be able to attract people on its own merit as something very special.

We have a golden opportunity to do just that, as if you accept the view that spring water from Mt Victoria should flow into the Waihine Park, then a portion of that water could be also directed into a living fresh water wetland in this complex. The Karori Sanctuary is about to apply for resource consent to attempt to remove introduced species and create a native fish only environment, this environment could be recreated in this complex. The possibility of creating an artificial night time environment for both fresh water and marine species should be considered as today all tanks are stand alone environmentally controlled units.

As we live in a region below the thirty ninth parallel we have a cold-water mangrove type intertidal wetland that has never been scientifically researched. However this will not last too much longer as the Government is now reviewing the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement and we know this type of wetland will be included this time. Government has also directed the Foundation of Research, Science and Technology to design a project to discover natural ecosystems. A marine complex could play a big part in this research.

Another unit in the complex should be a working model of how rainwater enters the aquifer, travels through old glacier gravels to be extracted for our water supply. This working model should also show the unique Wellington Harbour fresh water springs that exist all the way from Petone to Barrett Reef and the mysid shrimps that live in them. After all Wellington city receives seventy percent of its water supply from this aquifer. While making a working model of this environment would be a challenge it would not be impossible as a school boy made a working model of the Rotorua geysers system.

Lastly but perhaps the most important component of such a complex, would be showing off the fifty-six different varieties of fish species that have been caught within Wellington Harbour and then include the many other species that can be caught here that few have seen. Wellington Harbour alone has more fish species than any other harbour in New Zealand and we could have them all on display for all to see. Within our waters we have fish such as ling, hoki, gemfish, bass, hapuku, porbeagle sharks, seal sharks, rays bream, warehou, elephantfish, red cod, blue cod, yellow eyed mullet and redbait to mention a few. We know that few have ever heard of these fish let alone seen them so by their very name it will bring people in to look and learn. The region also has a well-advertised paua and kina fishery yet few would have ever seen them moving around on rocks. The possibilities endless, but we must spend the money you have set aside for a marine complex wisely so that Wellington as a city receives the maximum benefit. A complex as described would never need to be supported by the cities ratepayers, in fact the tourist potential is enormous and if planned as described would also be a must see for those visiting on the overseas tourist ships.

I am not saying a marine complex of education should not be considered, however, it would receive far greater public participation and financial support if it were to be incorporated within a massive marine aquarium complex within walking distance of Te Papa. As I mentioned at the last Annual Plan hearing I not keen on creating visual pollution that is not in keeping with the surrounding environment. The importance of ensuring what we do is not creating a visual pollution was impressed upon me by Councillor Andy Foster when I attended the Healing the South Coast meetings a few years ago, when he explained why the wild pines and the quarry had to go. This view has continued and was in my mind when I helped with the Owhiro Bay boat ramp design and was also the reason why we dismissed the option of a boat ramp at Island Bay. It would be completely illogical for the

council to go back on its own policy and fund a marine complex at Te Raekaihau Point as it will never blend in with the surrounding environment. Not only will it be the greatest eyesore along the whole coast it will be easily viewed by those travelling into Wellington by ship or plane and seen as a what's that?

There is some very logical opposition to a marine complex at this site as not only will it restrict access to the coast, if a marine reserve went ahead, it is immediately down current from a major sewage outfall and in the wake of environment destroying jet units of the fast ferries. A marine education complex so close to a major sewage pipe and a fast ferry wake would also be an embarrassing joke. Anyone who has looked out to sea cannot fail to see the surface slick of chemicals and milli-screened sewage spilling from the pipe and travelling along the coast into every rock pool as far as Sinclair Head. We would strongly oppose any proposal that would restrict the region's recreational fishers to the remaining two thousand metres of available coastline. Those who have used this point for years ridicule the proposal as they know the point is subjected to the notorious katabatic winds that have caused vehicles doors to be seriously damaged and people blown over. The area also has very little pedestrian traffic and is often subjected to very extreme weather conditions which will make this venture reliant on council funds forever.

Although the WCC have received a water quality report, like most scientific reports that we receive they are compiled to agree with a proposal, as to rubbish a proposal that has already received council financial backing would be financial suicide for that science provider. We can dispute this report without even reading it, as we have other reports describing marine life in the area being seriously reduced. It is extremely hard to believe that milli screened sewage and 38,000 litres of class eight caustic that flows into the area of the proposed complex with every incoming tide has not been recorded by this scientist, given the pipe is seven hundred and fifty metres away .

Another factor that will make a complex illogical on the south coast is that all around Moa Point the council has placed posts very close to the road, which in the past we have seriously questioned their purpose as they have been identified as a road hazard in a previous Annual Plan submission. However Councillor Ray Ahipene-Mercer has explained to us it is to stop vehicles parking on the grass and other vegetation due to the Moa Point boat ramp car park being too small. If we are to view grass damage and wild pine trees as visual pollution it therefore follows that a huge complex with a cafeteria attracting buses and no doubt a redesign of the road access would far exceed what council has viewed as visual pollution in the past.

This complex could be there for a lifetime or be destroyed in a big sea and abandoned like the ugly bait shed at Island Bay. Some years back a huge bird recovery/cafe/teraria complex was planned for Lowry Bay, also on the seaward side of the road and although all were surprised the resource consent was granted, a Land Court decision subsequently overruled the commissioner's illogical decision.

A marine complex to be financially viable and within the budget of most people must remain open every day and must be accessible to the paying public in all weather conditions; this will not be possible at Te Raekaihau Point.

Before I wrote this letter I researched how others would accept this view and sounded out a number of people including those involved with having an input into Wellington future and the support and encouragement has been extremely positive.

Those who have supported this vision have included:

The Lambton Harbour Waterfront Watch people.
The people opposing the marine centre at Te Raekaihau Point.
Makara Guardians of Quartz Hill.
Marine and fresh water scientists.
Recreational fishers.
Regional and city councillors that have been contacted.

Our only hope is, that it is not too late. We await your replies with a great deal of interest.

Yours sincerely

Jim Mikoz
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