

Submission from Louis Toorenborg – submitter to Northland Regional Council, on revised Consent Conditions for Opononi/Omapere Wastewater Treatment Plant and the Kohukohu Wastewater Treatment Plant Applicant: Far North District Council - Short term discharge permit to wastewater

Hi, I am Louis Toorenborg, a puzzler, a resident and local business owner in the Hokianga for nearly 50 years (1975). I am a battler, a warrior for the Hokianga, its environment and its people. I was a passionate member of the Opononi Wastewater Community Liaison Group, my main interest **WATER.** Until recently I was one of two elected representatives to the Kaikohe – Hokianga Community Board, representing South Hokianga, I stepped down after serving 9 years.

Thank you for your decision to grant a three-year consent instead of the 35 years that the old Council wanted, it has given the Hokianga Harbour an opportunity, a lifeline towards a better future. An opportunity to make improvements to our much loved, beautiful harbour, the food basket of its people. **FNDC LETS MAKE IT RIGHT.**

It will bring all the wastewater plants discharging into the Hokianga in line as all four will require new consents in over the next 3 years.

It will give FNDC with its new council an opportunity to put in the hard mahi to make changes to improve the ways we deal with our waste; **WE CANNOT CONTINUE TO KEEP POURING IT INTO OUR PRECIOUS HARBOUR.**

It has given FNDC an opportunity to look at and put in place alternatives like land-based systems and new technology like electrocoagulation for all our waste treatment plants. Let's find the ways so as to not burden our children and their children with our shit. **THE TIME IS NOW.**

This will require our new Council to work with NRC, Central Government (whoever gets in) through opportunities like Three Waters (or whatever will be in its place) to find the solutions.

It will require new Council to work with its people, the ones who elected them to do the hard work required.

I would like to especially thank all those submitters nearly 200 of them who have got themselves out of their Hokianga slumber and told the old Council in no uncertain terms, what is wanted. The people aren't afraid to do so and there are examples of this like the thousands that turned up against the SNA battles (twice). 30 years ago, the people also turned up in mass to fight for our hospital, our clinics and our special medical area that saw us retain our hospital.

In my submission I showed that nearly half of all waste (approx. 30,000 of the 65,000) in the Far North was being treated and released into the Hokianga, through it four wastewater treatment plants Opononi and Kohukohu subject of these hearings, Rawene and Kaikohe, with waste from Kerikeri and Russell being trucked to Kaikohe for final treatment before being released into what was a beautiful stream to end up in the Hokianga. Thankfully sludge from Kerikeri is now no longer ending up in the Hokianga since the installation of their new land-based system and with the remaining solids being turned into compost (that is what we are being told). Also much of the septage from septic tanks in the Far North ended up mainly in Kaikohe and some in Rawene. **LETS MAKE CHANGES SO THIS DOESN'T HAPPEN.** We now have an opportunity to do so.

I wanted to see our Hokianga Harbour become safe to swim in again, so often warning signs go up that our harbour is not safe to swim in, a really bad for business as a tourist destination, and shellfish not safe to eat, the hospital will probably have figures on the number of people who have gotten ill from swimming or eating shellfish from the harbour. It is so sad that its many local Marae no longer

safely able to gather from its food basket to feed its guests and has to look elsewhere outside the Hokianga for its food. Nearly 70% of our people in the Hokianga are Māori for them it is culturally unacceptable to have human waste added to their food basket, being Pakeha I feel the same way, **IT HAS TO STOP.**

I hope the study asked for will be done of the Hokianga Harbour to see what it needs to bring it back to a cleaner, pristine state. I know treated waste into our Harbour is only a small part of the problem, a holistic approach is needed that its future is assured.

Some additional comments:

3 Stock Proof Fencing – glad to see more emphasis on this, although fencing has been fixed or improved on a number of occasions, the problem still occurs. The problem is caused by wild cattle that seem to have no respect for fences. They wander around the whole catchment area causing problems in a water catchment zone. The solution would be to remove cattle from this catchment.

The problem was recognised back in the early 1980's when I worked for the then Hokianga County Council and the Waiarohia Stream was Opononi and Omapere only water supply, I got work done to fence off all water ways, plant natives in buffer zones and remove cattle from whole of catchment and plant it in forestry. Sadly, planting the whole catchment in a variety of trees that could be harvested at different timespans didn't happen, instead the majority was planted in pine.

4 Site management plan – this should be prepared in consultation with the Community Liaison Group

7 Community Liaison Group – I have a real problem with the way the Community Liaison Group was disbanded about 3 years ago. Largely because a legal question arose over representation. FNDC said they would get legal opinion on matters raised and would get back to the group within a month or two. They never did and when I checked with staff member on this it was never raised with council lawyers. Originally the Liaison Group was made up from those that made objections to the last consent applications.

It was convenient for Council not to have a Liaison group at the time, and it was able to push through resources consents for both water supply issues and wastewater ones.

I want to see assurances that FNDC cannot sideline the liaison group again. I feel that they should meet at least twice a year with the options of more meetings being held if needed.

THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT AND OVERLOOKED: The Community Liaison Group was not just the Opononi Wastewater Liaison Group it was also the Waitotemarama Water Supply Liaison Group, it was decided to combine the two groups many years ago as the issues dealt with were very similar and all affected to Opononi and Omapere Communities. There were a number of conditions the FNDC were required to meet under the Waitotemarama Consent, not sure these are being met these days. The two groups worked well together and would like to see that continue to happen. Some conditions will need to be set in this consent to allow for this to continue. I would like to get results of stream health surveys required as well as water usage from the stream, as well as a report back about the Smoothy Road bore, usage and issues.

13 Discharge – Council to find solutions to stop completely the discharge of treated wastewater to the Hokianga Harbour, acknowledging that this practice is culturally unacceptable. Currently there are concerns that treated waste doesn't always leave the harbour and into the ocean, there is local

concerns that shellfish are no longer safe to eat and that local Marea are having to source their seafood from outside the Hokianga area.

I have concerns that a local family safe beach, in Martin's Bay was continually being closed because it was tested as unsafe, it is where discharged wastewater will go especially in windy weather. NRC solution to the problem was to move the testing site to near Omapere wharf where water flows faster. Not a solution I say. We need to find why this is happening, could be because the outflow pipe broke of years ago and now discharge is closer to shore, instead of having pipe repaired NRC gave permission to allow this.

19 Levels of E-Coli and Nitrogen in discharge, concerned that the allowable levels have been increased, I would have thought the levels allowable would have been decreased. I know FNDC has been having trouble meeting the current requirements and has had an abatement notice from NRC since Sept 2016 on levels being exceeded. I would have thought that the priority would have been to reduce levels or at least meet the current requirements instead of increasing the levels so they would now be able to comply.

Let's hope the work gets done and that the Hokianga Harbour will become a place where it is once again safe to swim, safe to eat from and a place to bring its visitors, A place that FNDC and its people can be proud off, a place that Regional Government and Central Government can hold up as an example of what can be done.

Thank You

Louis Toorenburg