

## THE NORTHLAND AGE – 24<sup>th</sup> August 2017

### Letters: Council at the precipice

10:17 AM Thursday Aug 24, 2017

The Far North District Council is in peril if it doesn't take the recent uprising from dog owners seriously.

I stood for the mayoralty this time last year, which means that what concerns the people concerns me. And no one could argue the enormity of the recent uprising of dog owners in the Bay of Islands.

The council is planning to pass a new bylaw. Written, apparently, by a staff member with a connection to the Green Party, this bylaw would seriously restrict and reduce the number of areas where dogs can be exercised off-leash.

In some areas it intended to stop residents owning a dog at all. It even restricted the length of a dog leash.

Close to 700 people in the Bay of Islands ward of the council have already formed a group to oppose this. We can assume that other wards might muster numbers of people on a similar scale.

A few days ago the Waipapa Hall was filled to overflowing with upset dog owners. The occasion was the regular community board meeting, convened for residents to put all kinds of matters before council. It was a Monday morning. The dog owners politely listened to other business. Then they had their say.

I attended. It struck me that if the Waipapa Hall could be filled to overflowing on a Monday morning by dog owners, how many more could have been there if it were, say, 2pm on a Sunday?

It is important to me to take in the opinions of all sides of any debate. I needed to know that the dog owners were intelligent and considerate.

Fact is, they were. Speaker after speaker said they wanted to work with council, with DoC, to create an arrangement that would work for all. They felt that the Far North District Council had become completely anti-dog, with a mere smattering of dog off-leash places.

They felt that the role of the dog in the life of families, even single people, as a therapist, was being usurped by the FNDC, and that the FNDC would be held in contempt throughout New Zealand and in other parts of the world if the bylaw went ahead.

They accepted that bad dog owners anywhere will continue to exist.

The FNDC is not a council known for listening. But in this case, they would be wise to open their ears. A large force is braying at their gate.

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