

Comments to the Community, Sport and Recreation Committee of the Wellington City Council --- 5 February 2014.

By Joan Quinn, Committee Member of the Friends of the Wellington Town Belt --- regarding support for recommendation that the New Lease to Victoria University of Wellington Tennis Club being granted conditional on the club formally ending their agreement with Victoria University of Wellington Student Association to lease out the Tennis Club car parks to students.

My academic interest in the Wellington Town Belt started in the mid-1960s when I completed an MA Thesis in Geography on the development and pressures on the Wellington Town Belt.

Since the mid-1990s members of the Friends of the Wellington Town Belt Committee have been helping to protect and safeguard the Town Belt for future generations.

It is important to recognize the area occupied by the tennis club courts and parking area is not part of a general reserve but is part of the Wellington Town Belt and is subject to stricter regulations.

It was gifted to citizens in 1839 as land reserved for the enjoyment of the public and not to be built on.... Since 1873 it has been held in a Trust Deed by the Mayor, Councillors and Citizens of Wellington as a public recreation ground.

Since 1840 about 1/3 has been lost to other uses – Colleges/hospitals/Government House and Victoria University itself in 1906 and added to in following years.

Since 1908 – constant pressure by sports clubs – often acquiring the best areas of flat land. (Victoria University Tennis Club ... leased area since 1958 ..) It is the sub-lease of car parks to students that is the concern and issue.

Many many groups (worthy in themselves) have wanted to use Town Belt land eg. a Creche wanted land on Mt. Victoria to lease; the VUW Student's Association want land for leasing as car parks for students with genuine needs as a student service. Each however is the thin edge of the wedge with more land being lost to all Wellingtonians. It does not comply with the Trust.

Many citizens and groups such as Friends of the Wellington Town Belt have helped in the updating of the Town Belt Management Plan – just completed last year. This must be supported if we are to protect the area for future generations.

The plan is clear (9.6.3) – the Town Belt should not be used for non-recreational activity and developments are prohibited, or (9.6.4) -- leases and licences for non-recreational purposes such as for child care, Plunket and by learning institutions such as schools and community centres are prohibited.

Also (9.5.5) "Commercial Activities" - only permitted if -- the activity is necessary to enable the public to obtain the benefit and enjoyment of the Town Belt.

Just because something has been permitted in the past does not mean it should continue. If there are too many car parks for recreational users the parks should be replanted.

The Town Belt will not grow bigger but the population will. The Town Belt cannot be used to solve all problems. It is a green belt recognized world-wide.

I recognize VUW does have an understanding of the wide vision of the Town Belt with the Biology Group planting natives in this area and Graduates planting trees on the Town Belt. VUW Student's Association appear not to have been adequately consulted and other options looked at for the student's car parking.

However I believe the recommendations to grant the lease to the VUW Tennis Club on condition that they end the agreement with VUW Student's Association to lease out car parks to students is correct.

As trustees of the Wellington Town Belt I believe Councillors should agree to this recommendation.