

TABLED INFORMATION: Reference 004/13PT(h)

Oral Submission from Rosalind McIntosh to Wellington City Council on Town Belt proposals

Monday 18 February, 2013.

This submission has two parts—

- i a request to retain the wild nature of the town belt
- ii and a request to retain the Clifton Terrace site as part of the Town Belt.

My name is Rosalind McIntosh. I was born and grew up in Wellington, leaving at age 20 for doctoral studies at Cambridge University in England. I have spent much of my adult life out of New Zealand returning work as a Professor of Medical Research at the Wellington Medical School and to raise my children. I have lived on and off for 30 years in Wesley Rd very near the Clifton Terrace site which Council is proposing to sell. Currently I am an ordained Zen Buddhist Peacemaker minister with commitment to sustain and work for resilient and healthy communities and a just society.

i In my view, the continuing existence of Wellington's Town Belt shows the true greatness of vision of Wellingtonians and Wellington City Council. I thank the Council for the beautiful gift of this magnificent city that has called to me strongly during my many years living overseas.

The need to be connected to nature – and the benefits that answering this brings – cannot be new concepts to Wellingtonians and their Council. “No child left inside” is an essential path to our community’s sense of largeness of spirit, groundedness, peace, place and connection. The Green Belt is a refuge for the very many who walk there. We Pakeha know this nature connection deeply and still search to find expression with as much heart and marrow as the Maori have inherited. Those of us lucky enough to receive teachings from the earth, landscape, and weather, hunger for this connection.

It seems to be coded into our DNA to seek out familiar natural habitats, like light-dappled forest, open visas and sheltered spaces, natural running streams and ponds. Such wild places have soothed human spirits, expanded our vision, accepted our grief and given us gratitude and hope over millennia. Along with these restful and inspiring qualities, the natural world challenges us in essential ways. Wind storms, steep hills to climb, and crashing waves stimulate us to take on life’s challenges, and, unusual for urban dwellers, lift us into energetic awareness of our alive physicality. Wild nature is deeply restorative for the human spirit in both in its being, and in its call to action.

An essential component in our survival here in Wellington in the future may well be our ability to know experientially our climate, soils, water properties and courses, and what food grows well here. Such understanding may well determine whether we can feed ourselves in crises of climate change, seismic activity, deficiencies of accustomed energy sources and transport, and possibly large immigration. An undisturbed town belt can play a vital part in helping us connect with necessary knowledge to take care of ourselves.

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With regard to our personal accountability to the natural world, there is much evidence that this grows with our emotional connection to nature. A personal connection with the wild gives us reason to embrace sustainability and to honor our collective need to respect, protect, and learn from nature for the sake of our own continuing life. We understand that lack of human contentment and wellbeing comes at a high price to future generations of humans and non-humans alike. Wild nature plays a healing role for us in this.

Wellington is not just any city — its special character and attraction is not entirely comprised of, but is entirely dependent on the wild nature of its very accessible green Town Belt and seascape, both not having been subjugated to excessively large commercial building.

So my submission concerns

- leaving wild, Wellington's greatest jewel, its Town Belt and natural reserves.
- to not develop building on the Town Belt any further for any ends
- to not make it a user pays commodity
- to not modified it to suit our transient ideas of novelty and pleasure
- organized sport is great, but it is not the nature connection I am talking about. While sport should be encouraged, further building for organized sport on the Town Belt should not be permitted
- cafes and protected places are already sufficient
- elite sport can pay its way on other land
- the Town Belt should be for all to enjoy and be educated on natures creativity, fecundity, and beauty through our connection through walking in it, artistically, by sitting around campfires at night, sleeping out, watching the stars, being present to the dawn and the sunset.
- growing further native plants here is an essential reparation for the devastation we have wrought in the last two hundred years on the unique forest and its creatures throughout New Zealand.

The education and experiential programs currently provided by the Council are so very much to be appreciated and commended as well as the beautiful walks the Council has made available. Zealandia is an astonishingly wonderful place conceptually and experientially on world standards.

ii Which brings me to the proposed possibility of sale of original town belt on Clifton Terrace. I request in the strongest possible terms that this not happen but that this quiet and sheltered piece of land be returned to the care of the Council as part of the Town Belt

- for the children of the nearby school,
- for children in the urban area,
- for community gardens for apartment dwellers,
- for residents to walk their dogs and for the enjoyment of exploring tourists,
- for the mature trees providing shelter and food for birds and other life forms,
- for the wonderful plantings listed in another submission which have been carried out

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- and tended by dedicated local residents (including myself) over a long time,
- for the kaka (not listed during the brief observation time described in another submission, but very much present) and tui, fantails and wax eyes that also grace me with their delightfully interactive company at my house nearby,
- and for all the other insects and life forms that make up this unusual, and relative to elsewhere in Wellington, mature tree and under-story ecosystem.

Other places where these riches are not already present are suitable for building. To destroy this land and build on it would be a sad and unnecessary travesty.

In conclusion I request that the Council please keep wild the heart of Wellington, our Green Town Belt.

At the conclusion of my submission I was asked whether I supported the use of Town Belt buildings for community activities, and for use of Town Belt space as places where “kids can kick a ball around.”

I replied that I needed to reflect on these questions. On reflection, my answer is “Yes!” I strongly support the use of current buildings for non-institutionalized, non-profit community activities, and the use of current suitable space for kids to kick a ball around. I see Council support of both these activities as very important, as is Council support of community gardens. However, without detailed knowledge I suspect that new buildings for community activities are not needed given the number of church and school halls which could be used.

In general I would support strongly that the over-riding use of the Green Belt should be unstructured, non-commercial recreation and leisure activities in natural surroundings such as I have described above, and that alternative land for additional community gardens, community activities, and children’s playing spaces be sought and determined unavailable before requests for these uses of the Town Belt are considered very carefully within the overall purpose and usage.

Thank you for receiving this submission.

Yours sincerely
Rosalind McIntosh