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Tēnā koutou katoa Local Body Candidates,

The Friends of Taputeranga Marine Reserve Trust (FoTMR) are writing to the nominated candidates in the Te Whanganui-a-Tara / Wellington local body 2022 elections to ask for urgent, meaningful action to recognise, promote and protect our marine biodiversity in a healthy state.

Our marine environment is unique and part of our identity

Wellington is surrounded by water on three sides. It is part of our heritage, identity, recreation and economy, and is highly significant to mana whenua. Our diverse marine environment is home to a wide variety of habitats and a unique collection of plants and animals, including dolphins, rays, orcas, sponge gardens, blue penguins and giant kelp.

Taputeranga Marine Reserve allows people to experience Wellington's unique marine environment. Since it was established some 15 years ago, sea-life in the reserve has burgeoned and it's an increasing popular as a destination for snorkelers, divers and people enjoying the beaches and rock pools. It is also an important scientific and educational resource.

FoTMR was formed in October 2009 to foster understanding and appreciation of the reserve, and to monitor, manage and protect the full range of the Marine Reserve's potential benefits.

Wellington's pipes are in a dire state

There has been considerable, deserved media attention this triennium about Wellington's three waters networks (drinking, sewage and stormwater). This situation has been known about for decades. But, being out of sight and out of mind, this vital infrastructure has shamefully been neglected and allowed to fall into disrepair.

Raw sewage gets into our stormwater system every time it rains heavily. Pipe breakages as well as constructed overflows all result in raw sewage flowing into the streams, our harbours and coast. These illegal discharges are culturally abhorrent, ruin our recreational use of local beaches, and harm aquatic life and marine mammals. Data for Wellington Harbour show contaminants above guidelines for aquatic life. Contaminants in sewage put people at risk when swimming or diving. Pollution and discharges impact not just the ecology and environment but the mauri life force and our kaitiakitanga role.

Billions of dollars are needed in the short term – right now - to fix the problem.

Wellington City Council is owner and financier of the three water assets. GWRC has regulatory responsibilities for the consenting and compliance of assets and discharges, and enforcement role for

non-complying or non-consented discharges. Regardless of the Three Water Reforms outcomes, both organisations must accept their responsibility. The moment has come to seriously address the underfunding and mismanagement of three water assets – a step change in investment and council priorities is required now.

Biodiversity faces a global crisis and Wellington, Aotearoa is not immune.

The indigenous biodiversity of Aotearoa New Zealand is unique and irreplaceable. There has been a major decline, both in quantity and quality, in many of our native species. Some habitats and ecosystems may already be beyond tipping points and recovery will require significant positive interventions. This is particularly important for areas that fail to prioritise the environment and indigenous biodiversity when making land-use decisions.

As human impacts on our environment increases, the cumulative negative impacts on fresh and coastal water can result in negative effects on water-based recreation, and marine biodiversity being stressed and threatened, as well as having adverse effects on cultural values and tourism.

Ensuring our environmental values are met and that people's prosperity continue are not mutually exclusive and paramount to ensuring Wellington retains its liveable city status. There is opportunity to deliver a range of projects to successfully connect environment, economy and enhance liveability and community health and wellbeing, as well as positive outcomes for marine biodiversity.

Support and coordination of efforts protecting the marine environment.

There are a number of community groups working in their own ways to help improve and protect our taiao, our environment. These groups trap pests, plant trees, run clean-ups, etc which all help improve habitats, reduce sediment and pollution run-off and thus go toward improving the coastal environment.

However, there is no overall support or coordination of these positive efforts to protect the marine environment. Local government, in its present or future form, is in a unique position to join these together to make the biggest possible difference.

We would like to see Wellingtonians being supported to play their part in restoring and preserving biodiversity through a coalition of organisations, from local communities, iwi, councils, and government agencies, working together to protect and enhance the whenua, the wai and te taiao.

Our dependence on the natural environment comes with responsibility to protect it.

If you are successfully elected, FOTMR would like your commitment to the following being incorporated and implemented by council programmes of work:

- Holistic and meaningful action to recognise, promote, protect and restore the ecology and water quality of coastal Wellington, including Wellington Harbour
- Fully fund wastewater and stormwater asset management plans- specifically renewal and upgrades programmes.
- Restore te mana me te mauri o te wai of our waters
- Truly value water – recognise and express water's, often forgotten, multiple values and incorporate these into decision-making to achieving sustainable and equitable water resources management.

- Recognising that ecosystems are connected in decisions that are made. The loss or degradation of biodiversity and ecosystems on land can have negative impacts on marine and freshwater environments, and vice versa (city to sea: hills to harbour).
- Continue to support community groups achieve their objectives, potentially through a coalition of organisations.

Nāku noa, nā,

Nicole Miller,
Chair FoTMR