



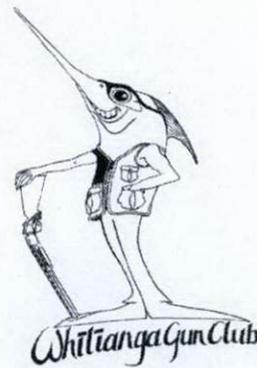
Whitianga Gun Club
PO Box 27
WHITIANGA 3510
4 September 2018

Mr Bill McLean
Mercury Bay Community Board
Mercury Bay Ward
Thames Coromandel District Council
(Left at Whitianga Council Offices for collection)

Dear Bill,
you will no doubt be aware of the recent decision, relayed via letter to selected Community Groups, to cease Rates subsidies on Council, leased land.
We attach a letter from this Club in response to the decision, which we submit will have a detrimental effect to both membership, and the financial position of the Club.
We sincerely trust that you will take the time to read the letter and support the interests of our Members by stopping this proposed action.

Regards

Ian Marshall
President



Whitianga Gun Club Inc.
PO Box 27
WHITIANGA 3510
4 September 2018

Ms Heather Bruce
Community Manager
Mercury Bay
"Delivered by hand".

Dear Heather, we are in receipt of your letter of 8 August 2018 and following discussion at our recent Committee Meeting, have been directed to respond to your letter.

We are very disappointed to be advised that with effect from the 2019 Rating year, the Council will cease to provide the Rates subsidy that has been in existence for many years.

This action, from correspondence (7 March 2018 MBCB minutes) available, appears to be selective, seemingly only four of the Community Group of nine are currently targeted, whilst another eight Groups are exempted.

This action to target the Gun Club, and Rugby Club, appears without logic, and comments within the minutes allude to the "common denominator" of the existence of a Bar license for members use??

The Whitianga Gun Club has a current Bar license, and the Bar is for the strictly controlled use by Members on Monthly shoot days, and in no shape or form is a "Public bar." This is hardly, we submit, a reason, to begin recovering Council rates. Emergency and other Community Service Groups enjoy other benefits and the existence of a Members Bar, is not a relevant basis for commencing to charges Council rates.

During that time, whilst membership remains small (15-20 active shooters) we have maintained the property and access road continuously, mowing lawns, re-metalling the roadway and spraying weeds, repainting and improving facilities - and developing the property to something that today we are proud of.

The Club has produced a number of NZ champion shooters over the years (five NZ and three World) and is an asset to the Mercury Bay Community. We do not approach or draw on Council resources for anything, have no rubbish collection and our Clubrooms are of a good standard and well maintained. All members are ratepayers in this or other Coromandel towns.

Recently without discussion with, or advice to our Club, land to the south boundary was cleared and trees removed. The trees had been planted by the Club some 10 years ago.

We remain unaware as to why the land was cleared, but have offered to mow the area once grassed to maintain some control on residents or visitors accessing the land on Shoot days and to save the Council cost in maintaining this area.

We continue to act where ever possible in the best interests of our member's and the wider community.

The MBCB "Leasing Policy document" addresses (page 1 point 4) changes that may impact upon organizations financial positions, necessitating additional fundraising etc..quite correct, but where fund raising is relevant for Emergency Groups (exempted anyway), and is a popular past time, it is difficult if not impossible to fund raise for a Gun Club, other than by increasing fees or directly canvassing members.

Whilst the equity with other Clubs owning or leasing non Council land has some relevance, it should be noted that these are larger more financial organizations which have no doubt incorporated those operating costs into base membership, are investing for future Capital gain, and have an increasing asset on which to borrow or reinvest.....so effectively there is no change to their positions.

However, for the Whitianga Gun Club (a small Club on leased Council land) to be saddled with another cost of this annual magnitude is not in the Clubs or Communities best interests and could result in our having to raise membership fees, usually resulting in a reduced membership, and more difficulty in funding additional cost.

We actively work as a Committee, to reduce operating costs, not increase them. Membership of a Gun, Rugby or Boating Club as you will appreciate is discretionary, and members (in our case) already require to fund Targets, guns and ammunition, in a sport which by any standard is expensive to enjoy and even more expensive to excel at.

Whilst the proposed move is revenue gathering for the Council (circa \$7800 from the four targeted clubs), we remain certain that it will not result in a reduction in rates for Mercury Bay residents , so is not in the Communities best interests, and in fact could act against the Public's best interests, and be seen as selectively targeting Community Groups

Over the past 10 years the Whitianga Club has made substantial donations to other Community Groups, including Westpac Helicopter service, The Fire Brigade, and local Youth Groups in our area.

Lastly, unlike Clubs with a larger membership, the increased cost will result in an increase in Membership fees, with a need to possibly reduce or cease future donations which similarly is not in the best interests of both members and the wider Community.

We urge you to reconsider your decision, and are available to meet and discuss your letter further.

With kind regards

Ian Marshall
President

