

IN THE MATTER

of the Resource Management Act 1991

AND

IN THE MATTER

of an application by **THAMES COROMANDEL DISTRICT COUNCIL** for a comprehensive resource consent for festivals and events at Williamson Park, Whangamata

**Statement of Evidence of MARY JOANNE SCHNEEBELI
on behalf of the Friends of Williamson Park Society**

Dated 25 October 2018

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SUMMARY

1. My name is Jo Schneeбели.
2. I oppose the proposed resource consent application because:
 - a. It is a commercial exploitation of Williamson Park; and
 - b. It is contrary to the gift deed.
3. I suggest there is an alternative site where the new proposed events could be held.

OBJECTIONS

4. My full name is Mary Joanne Schneeбели. I am 75 years old. I am an interested party on the basis that I am a permanent resident of Whangamata. I have lived here for 29 years. Prior to that, my family has holidayed in the area since 1971 and we have had a bach here for a number of years before retiring.
5. I have been involved with the Whangamata community since our retirement in 1989. I have belonged to the croquet club since then and have the honour of being a Life Member. I am involved with the Theatre Society, the volunteer fire service, the Information Centre for several years, and was the Secretary and President of Whangamata Grey Power for over 10 years. My husband and I were convenors for the Ramblers Club and volunteers for Civil Defence. I therefore have a long-standing commitment, interest and love of our local community. I care very much about its future.
6. For this reason, I oppose the use of Williamson Park for the purposes proposed in the resource consent application.
7. Whangamata is what is known in some political and town planning circles as a "NORC" – that is a "naturally occurring retirement community". Most of our permanent residents here and all over the Coromandel are retired. We came to Whangamata to retire to the lifestyle we all worked and saved for. We were always aware of the enormous influx of visitors in holiday periods, it is part of the lifestyle.
8. I have always had a huge respect for the early history of Whangamata and those settlers who created the busy, social, friendly community we have today. They set up organisations such as St Johns Ambulance, the library, the Memorial Hall, Moana House, the Surf Club and other sports clubs. They donated their time, their money and their land for

this town. Their history is in some of our street names. The Williamson Family are hugely represented.

9. Williamson Park was one of those areas donated to the community for recreational use in perpetuity by the pioneering Williamson family. I am very opposed to the proposed commercial exploitation of Williamson Park. To alter its use for the financial benefit of a handful of business "entrepreneurs" is totally disrespectful and dismissive to the wishes behind the gift.
10. Historically, the park has had many uses including market days and concerts. But concerts have been free – no one was making a profit from them, or fencing off restricted areas with ugly, black wire and plastic fences. In fact, the ratepayers help fund those concerts to make them free, and were willing to do so to help restore order after the mayhem of some New Year's events during the 1980s.
11. During the market days, Beach Hop, Brits at the Beach, and sporting events, free access was always maintained to the Park. Anyone could still come and go, free from restrictions while the alcohol was mostly respected.
12. The proposal now to allow professional promoters to financially exploit the park is a breach of trust to this community. The perceived attendances of between 6-10,000 seems unmanageable in that space when safety issues, barrier erections, parking facilities, toilet facilities and emergency stations are taken into account. How could 6000 or more people be evacuated quickly from such a vulnerable site?
13. I am vehemently against the commercialisation of Williamson Park. However, I see a possibility of the events being viable in a different area. Already, the park down by the wharf is used annually during the fishing contests. There seems to be no problems obtaining resource consent to erect the marquee which remains up for over a week. Alcohol is also sold at these contests.
14. I suggest that this area could be utilised for the concerts. It is surrounded by fewer houses and would offer less congestion in the streets. It would also avoid the public nuisance of restricting access to a much-used surfside park.

Mary Joanne Schneebeli

25 October 2018