
Albert-Eden Local Board Chairperson's Report

Executive Summary

The report provides the Chair with an opportunity to update the Albert-Eden Local Board and community on the projects and issues that he and the Local Board have been involved with since the last meeting.

Recommendation/s

- a) That the Albert-Eden Local Board Chair's Report for the period 20 October 2017 to 7 November 2017 be received.
- b) That the Albert-Eden Local Board request the Mayor and Governing Body to urgently seek an amendment to the Resource Management Act to restore a form of general tree protection that prevents the rapid further decline in the urban forest which is reported to have resulted from the elimination of general tree protections under the 2009 and 2013 amending legislation.
- c) That this resolution be drawn to the attention of the Mayor and Governing Body.

Rates Valuations

The property revaluations that will help determine how the general residential rates increase is applied next year were released on 16 November. Albert-Eden experienced among the highest rates increases in the first term, and the highest increases in the second term because property values in our area increased so much faster than the average across Auckland. This time the increase in Epsom was 39%, Mt Eden & Pt Chevalier 41%, Greenlane 42%, Sandringham 43% and Mt Albert 49% compared to the average across the region of 45%. It should be noted that rates increases higher than the average do not represent a 'windfall' for Council; some property owners have enjoyed decreases in their rates at some point over the past seven years. Property owners who receive a rates valuation that doesn't look right are urged to seek advice as it may be worth challenging the valuation.

Tree Protections

The new Government represents an opportunity to provide the urban forest with some improved protections.

Since 2010, a number of legal developments that have changed the tree rules across the region:

- Resource Management (Simplifying and Streamlining) Act 2009 amended the Resource Management Act to specifically restrict Councils' ability to protect urban trees;
- The 2011 Declaration of the Environment Court to Auckland Council confirming the Council's legal interpretation of the 2009 Resource Management Act changes as applied to the Auckland area
- Resource Management Amendment Act 2013 changes, further restricting the ability to protect urban trees.

As a result of these actions, tree protection in Auckland's urban areas has moved from the universal and quite restrictive protections enjoyed under the previous District Plans by all trees above certain heights to protection only for individually scheduled trees and some groups of trees.

The impact on the urban forest has been estimated at around 30%. While the overall impact may be less than that, we have seen a number of notable trees in our area that did not meet the very strict assessment criteria for scheduling lost since 2013.

It is not clear exactly what Council should seek in the way of protections to stem the loss of significant trees. However, I believe that it is important to add the Board's support to action by the Governing Body and Mayor urgently to seek an amendment to the Resource Management Act to restore a form of general tree protection that prevents the rapid further decline in the urban forest.

Activities undertaken from 20 October 2017 to 16 November 2017

This report covers activities undertaken during the period from October 2017 to 16 November 2017.

Opening of Playground at Eric Armishaw Park, Pt Chevalier

The Local Board opened the new playground and paths at Eric Armishaw Park on Friday, 3 November. A sizable crowd of children, parents and local people gathered to hear the speeches and partake of sausages and ice blocks. We were honoured to have the local MP, Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern to lead the children in declaring the playground open!



Board Member Margi Watson thanks those involved in bringing the project to fruition at the opening of the Eric Armishaw Park Playground Opening. Photo: Jessica Rose

150th Anniversary of Local Government in Mt Albert

This month the Local Board was pleased to celebrate 150 years of local government in Mt Albert, from the inception of the Mount Albert Highway District Board at five o'clock on Tuesday, 8 January, 1867. There was a photographic display at Ferndale House from 9-11 November, and on Saturday 11 November we held a Garden Party.

According to the Royal Commission on Auckland Governance, local government functions in Auckland prior to this were largely carried out by the Provincial Council. Eden County, which was to take over the functions of local government on the Auckland isthmus, never became an 'operative county council.'

And so it was that in 1867 thirteen settlers met in the Whau Rd schoolroom to elect the first board of five trustees and to strike the first rate. Mt Albert itself was still predominantly a farming area at this time, with a few clusters of housing around Kingsland and Morningside (or Cabbage Tree Swamp as the area was called).

Inevitably this caused problems and it is worth reflecting on the experience at the outset of local government in a major part of our area. In short, those at the 'town end' of the district objected to what they saw as an unduly high rate (one penny in the pound) that would be used to build a 'road to nowhere' (Avondale, actually) that would benefit the wealthy landowners who lived further from town and who had already started subdividing their land for huge profit.

Things were made worse by the property valuations released on 1 May, which showed values at the town end increasing eight-fold over the previous three years. Town-enders also objected to the toll being levied at the top of the Whau Rd (now the New North Rd) to travel the short distance that many of them lived out of town.

At the annual meeting in October of 1867, which was notable for the level of rancour and its duration, the old guard was routed and a new board voted in. The rate was halved.

In summary, questions of equity dominated the debate as the district grappled with the funding of infrastructure necessary to support growth. After 150 years, one could ask, '*Plus ça change?*'

The further lesson may be that the rate was set too low, and little progress was made on fixing Mt Albert's roading problems for some time. Eventually, in 1875, Eden Terrace got its own separate roads board, the rate was restored to one penny and the toll gate was shifted further out of town.

Having established local government and a means to provide the necessary infrastructure, Mt Albert district got on with the job of growing and prospering with great success. The Local Board is conscious that we are building on many years of civic development and progress. We are indebted to those who have gone before us for their clear-sightedness, hard work and courage. Over the years, Mt Albert has been well served by its local government representatives. They shaped the district into an attractive place to live, work and play; one well provided for with civic amenities and an enduring pride of place. Today, the residents of Mt Albert are generally proud of their district, and I can say on behalf of the Local Board that we are equally proud to represent it.



Elected members of local government in Mt Albert (L-R), Paul Harrop (Eden-Albert Community Board), Graeme Easte and Lee Corrick (Albert-Eden Local Board), Gillian Dance (Eden-Albert Community Board), Alice Wylie (Deputy Mayor, Mt Albert City Council), Lindsey Rae (Chair, Eden-Albert Community Board), Margi Watson and Peter Haynes (Albert-Eden Local Board). In front, descendants of the original residents of Ferndale House, Imogen Bassett and her daughter.