

SUBMISSION TO THE ROTORUA LAKES COUNCIL FROM THE LAKE TARAWERA RATEPAYERS' ASSOC.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Lake Tarawera is considered by many as the jewel in the crown of the Rotorua lakes due to easy accessibility and its supposedly pristine environment but the water quality continues to decline due to natural and man made inputs.

A reticulated wastewater scheme and decommissioning of existing septic tanks is guaranteed to remove some nutrients from entering the lake and needs to be implemented as a matter of urgency.

In response to a community request the Rotorua Lakes Council (RLC) established the Lake Tarawera Sewerage Steering Committee (LTSSC). The committee was formed in August 2016 and has been working through the significant issues. Funding has been a concern for the Lake Tarawera Ratepayers' Association (LTRA) as the only confirmed funding was from RLC of \$.75 million. At every AGM of the LTRA since 2015 the members have been told there will be no funding from the Bay of Plenty Regional Council (BoPRC) until at least 2020/21. When it was announced in August 2017 that an application to the Government's Freshwater Fund had been successful and the project was granted \$6.5 million the community was delighted. However we have been advised taking into account the subsidies so far the cost per property is around \$22,000.00. We understand the LTSSC is trying to reduce this cost to around \$15,000.00 requiring additional subsidies of approximately \$3.5 million.

The LTRA supports the submission of the LTSSC

- In requesting the BoPRC for \$2.5 million and the RLC to waive the Capital Contribution of approximately \$2.7 million to help fund this important project. The \$2.7 million we are asking RLC to waive is for connecting to the existing Lake Okareka system, since the additional loading had already been factored in, and that property owners have already made a contribution through previous rates.
- The LTRA also supports the LTSSC submission asking the Council to amend its Long Term Plan to allow payment by way of Lump Sum or by Targeted Rates. The Targeted Rate be spread over 25 years and supports Council's options two and three.

JUSTIFICATION

- The recent onsite wastewater capacity report commissioned by the BoPRC at the request of the LTSSC to see if OSET was a viable option found a range of environmental constraints were identified by BoPRC which limit effective and sustainable OSET management at Lake Tarawera.
- The Rotorua Te Arawa Lakes Strategy Group adopted the Tarawera Lakes Restoration Plan in December 2015. The number one action in the Restoration Plan is to *'reticulate houses in the Lake Tarawera urban community and upgrade conventional septic tanks outside the future reticulation zone'*. The LTSSC has now included the Landing, Te Mu Road, The Buried Village and the Tarawera Trail carpark to this scheme.

- In 2006 a working party tasked with generating an action plan for Lake Tarawera also recommended that the number one action required to protect the water quality in Lake Tarawera was to reticulate wastewater in the community.
- Lake Okareka's wastewater reticulation scheme has been designed to accept the effluent from the Tarawera community in the future.
- There is widespread support for a wastewater reticulation scheme from Tarawera ratepayers. At a public meeting following the recent LTRA AGM in January, where approximately 129 property owners attended, a resolution was passed for a reticulated sewerage scheme to go via Lake Okareka to the wastewater plant in Rotorua. 99 in favour and only one dissenting voter.
- In recent summers there have been health warnings issued due to blue-green algae blooms in the Wairua arm of Lake Tarawera.
- Many of the Lake Tarawera lakeside residents drink untreated lake water. The LTRA has been investigating the potential health risks involved in drinking water in summer and winter. Results from 1991-2005 and 2015-2018 show faecal coliforms present in untreated drinking water supplies from a number of locations around the lake. There are also notices in the lakeside public toilet blocks (which are serviced with untreated lake water adjacent to the toilets) advising not to drink the water.
- Many property owners at Lake Tarawera are not in a financial position to pay a lump sum for the sewerage scheme, therefore want to have the option of paying a targeted rate spread over 25 years. Every other lakeside community in the Rotorua district that has reticulated sewerage has had this option. To deny the Lake Tarawera Community this option would be grossly unfair, particularly as this community pays some of the highest rates in Rotorua. It would be a travesty if some of our community had to sell their properties if they were forced to pay a lump sum; a number of these families are now fourth generation.
- The Rotorua Lakes Community Board, The Lakes Water Quality Society, local Iwi and residents of the Lake Tarawera Community are supporting this submission.

Libby Fletcher
Chairperson
Lake Tarawera Ratepayers' Assoc.