

Chair's Report

Kia ora koutou, Welcome everyone!

Reflecting on the year that has passed in our beautiful community of Hahei. Fair to say, it's been quite a rollercoaster, and I'm keen to avoid a repeat of the summer of 2023! There were many challenges, and I'd like to start by acknowledging one significant event that had a profound impact on us all.

Cyclone Gabrielle

Thanks to the destructive force of Cyclone Gabrielle, we found ourselves dealing with both the loss of SH25A and the economic nightmare caused by the damage and closure of Cathedral Cove. This affects not only our community but also the livelihoods of our local businesses. It continues to be a trying time, and I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to those who have stepped up.

Community Resilience

In times of adversity, our community has shown incredible resilience. I want to acknowledge the tireless efforts of Mike, Phil, and our Business Association in their dedication to encouraging visitors and bach owners to return to Hahei. A special shout-out goes to Marty O'Halloran, a bach owner and global advertising guru, who generously offered his marketing support and expertise. It was his brainchild, the Lucky Loop promotion at Easter, which endeavoured to breathe new life into the East Coast.

Engaging the Committee

This year, we continued to utilize technology by conducting our meetings through Zoom. This allowed non-resident and well-traveled committee members to actively participate and contribute. Ensuring every committee member feels engaged is vital, and I am proud to say that we have a committee of 'doers' rather than 'sitters.'

Communication Channels

Throughout the year, we have kept our community informed about Council and DOC initiatives, policy changes, and various community (and weather) events. We achieved this through our Ratepayer newsletter and social media platforms, including our Ratepayer Facebook page and the Hello Hāhei page. If you're not already subscribed to these channels, I strongly recommend you do so to stay updated.

Accomplishments and Challenges

Reflecting on what we've accomplished, and the challenges we've faced this year, there was more than expected:

1. Ratepayer Chair Hui: Brett and I attended several quarterly Ratepayer Chair Hui, providing us with the opportunity to discuss community concerns with other Ratepayer Chairs, Community Board members, Councillors, and Council staff. This broader perspective has been invaluable, and we thank the Council for facilitating it.
2. DOC's Marine Reserve Proposal: After community input following our last AGM, DOC's proposed changes to the marine reserve were tweaked to reflect our concerns. Community engagement played a pivotal role in this positive outcome.

3. Long-Term Plan Submission: We submitted our concerns about the Long-Term Plan, particularly the rates increase and funding cuts for community water and sewage upgrades. Unfortunately, the damage caused by Gabrielle has used up all spare funds at Council, so none of the budgeted upgrades for sewage treatment in Hahei will happen next year. Councillors Connell and Giri were able to squeeze some funds out of the Council to cover feasibility studies, so a start can be made.
4. Hahei as a Walkable Village: Brett drafted a plan for maintaining Hahei as a walkable, safe, and family-friendly village, which we presented to the council.
5. Community Response Plan: In collaboration with Council and Emergency Services, Paul and I updated our community response plan after Cyclone Gabrielle, addressing areas that needed improvement. Key to this was ensuring our non-digital savvy residents are contacted in the event of a lengthy power cut.
6. Community Planting Initiatives: We supported planting initiatives at the entrance to Hahei village and above the Cathedral Cove car park, enhancing our natural surroundings. You'll note the giant rock out of Snake Gully is now a feature at the village entrance. Thanks to Steve Borlase for pushing the idea along, and to Donovan's for doing the same with the rock!
7. Beach Access Bollard: Our ongoing efforts to oppose the erection of a beach access bollard saw robust community support, following a comprehensive survey of residents and non-residents. This issue is far from resolved, and we are continuing to actively seek a better outcome from the council. The council cites Health and Safety, but we feel it's the thin end of the wedge to vehicles being banned entirely from Hahei Beach. Thanks again to Councillors Connell and Giri for their ongoing support.
8. Lifeguard Services: Due to funding constraints, we won't have lifeguard services at Hahei Beach and Cathedral Cove this summer. Paid lifeguards at our beaches are funded by WRC. The minimum wage has increased, but not what Surf receives. So, cuts had to be made. Councillor Connell has been advocating for additional funding, but this will not be addressed immediately.
9. Cathedral Cove Closure: Despite our best efforts and alternative access suggestions, the closure of Cathedral Cove remains a challenge due to DOC's risk tolerance post-Whakaari/White Island and Cave Creek incidents.
10. Community Skateboard Half Pipe: Thanks to Geoff Hick and local builders/skaters, we now have a skateboard half-pipe in place on Kotare Reserve, providing recreational opportunities for our community. And so far, no need to patch anyone up at the nearby ambulance station!!
11. Community Evacuation Centre: We have raised funds and researched generator options for our community evacuation centre (this hall), and I'll provide an overview of our decision in General Business.
12. And finally, we submitted on proposed changes to the signage bylaw. Brett, as the resident expert spoke at the hearing. Our goal here was to support local businesses without succumbing to signage pollution.

Community Giving Back

In our commitment to giving back to our community, this year, our committee has:

1. Supported Planting Initiatives: We assisted with funding for more planting initiatives, contributing to the beautification of our community.

2. Shade Sails for Country Kids: We provided funding for shade sails at Country Kids, ensuring a safe and comfortable environment for our children.

3. Support for Bellyful: We extended our support to the Bellyful organization, making a positive impact on the lives of families in need.

4. ANZAC Day Service: We supported the well-attended ANZAC Day service in the Kotare Reserve memorial garden, keeping the spirit of remembrance alive. Special thanks to John for organising the event and then leaving the song and dance routine to me!

Thank You to the Committee

Before I conclude, I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to the incredible committee members who have selflessly dedicated their time and energy to our community. Your contributions, both individually and collectively, have been humbling.

As we move forward, the challenges of managing vehicles on the beach and addressing water and sewage remain at the forefront of our efforts. We will continue to monitor the Council's proposed changes in policies, bylaws, and plans, keep you informed and where necessary make submissions on behalf of the community. Together, we will continue to work towards the betterment of Hahei.

In closing, it has been a privilege to serve as your chairman this year. While I'll be stepping down from this role, I look forward to continuing my involvement on the committee. Hahei is a special place, and I am committed to its growth and prosperity.

Thank you all for your unwavering support, dedication, and passion for our community. Let us look ahead to a bright future for Hahei.

Ngā mihi nui, Thank you