

## Meet the Te Awarua-o-Porirua Whaitua Committee & Ngāti Toa Rōpu

Te Awarua-o-Porirua Committee and Ngāti Toa Rōpu combined the knowledge and experience of the community who care about this catchment: iwi, householders, scientists, recreationalists, business owners, and environmentalists.

Meet the Committee:

- Stu Farrant (Chair)
- Hikitia Ropata
- Richard Cook
- John Gibbs
- Dr John McKoy
- Warrick Lyon
- Diane Strugnell
- Councillor David Lee
- Councillor Dale Williams
- Larissa Toelupe
- Councillor Barbara Donaldson

Meet the Ngāti Toa Rōpu

- Sharli-Jo Solomon
- Jennie Smeaton



**Stu Farrant** (Chair) is an ecological engineer with an interest in integrated water management and designed solutions using natural processes to support tangible outcomes for the environment and stakeholders. As a youth he spent his free time roaming the upper farm tributaries, streams and headwaters of the Porirua catchment and this sparked his early interest in the natural environment and what he now understands to be hydrology. More recently he has lived in Pukerua Bay on the upper tributary to Ara Harakeke (Taupo Swamp). As a keen diver and spear fisher his perspective on water reaches beneath the surface and as an active participant in community conservation projects he understands that engaging the community at a deeper level is key to success.

“I am excited by the unique approach being taken by this process. We have an opportunity to work as a community to understand and encourage people who live in the catchment particularly our young ones, to determine what they want for the future.”

Stu regards Te Awarua-o-Porirua as a regional asset to be enhanced and protected. His passion for ecology, and understanding of the existing

demands and pressures on the catchment, will be valuable when it comes to finding a way forward.



**Hikitia Ropata**, Ngāti Toa Rangatira, Ngati Raukawa ki e Tonga, Te Ati Awa ki Whakarongotai, represents Greater Wellington's Te Upoko Taiao (Natural Resources Management Committee) on the Committee. Hikitia has a background in public policy across a range of social, economic and sustainable development areas, including a recent role for Auckland Council managing the Parks and Open Space Policy team.

A passionate advocate for her people and a papakainga shareholder of land in Hongoeka Bay, Hikitia brings with her a keen focus on our role as stewards, guardians and protectors of our land and water. Currently, Hikitia is a Manager in the education sector and lives in Pōneke.



**Richard Cook** has a Bachelor of Forestry Science and has worked in the Australian, Irish and New Zealand Forest Industries for the last 10 years. He is the Southern North Island Branch Manager for PF Olsen Ltd. In this role, Richard and his team work with the Porirua community and its environment. Richard also has experience in retail and dry stock farming.

In his current role and as a member of the Southern North Island Wood Council, Richard is well placed to provide a link between the forest industry, the local community and the environment. "I am an avid believer in productive and sustainable land management to ensure a clean and dynamic environment in the future." Richard says.

Richard steadfastly believes that finding solutions is a two-way street. "Improving the quality of water to a state where the aquatic environment thrives and we can swim safely and harvest healthy seafood, is imperative if future generations are to prosper.

"We need to make the effort to understand the goals methodologies, issues and constraints that people work under to find common ground and an outcome that suits everybody."

John has an in-depth knowledge of the workings of the Te Awarua-o-Porirua catchment and the infrastructure that supports its urban areas. A long-time

resident of Porirua catchment he is a member of Mana Lions Club, Maararoa Conservation Group and Friends of Mana Island. He is also a keen wind surfer, kayaker and whitebaiter and he says that while over the decades he has seen the negative effects of development and land use, he has also seen how the quickly the environment can recover once problems are addressed. “It’s wonderful to see the harbour and coast being used and enjoyed and to see the community involved in its protection. Catchments work on gravity so it’s always better to solve problems at their source than wait until the downstream effects overwhelm.” “Because the Whaitua committee will be working with the three local authorities and will involve the community all the way, it has the potential to influence the way we care for our waterways.” John believes the success of the committee will be seen in the way it works with the community to set the agenda, produces tangible measures of progress and communicates how to get things done. “Ultimately we will see the disbanding of the committee when we have finished the Te Awarua-o-Porirua chapter in the Natural Resource Plan,” says John.



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**John McKoy** has lived in Porirua since 1973 and has played in and used its coastal waters for most of that time. As a marine scientist, consultant in fisheries research and management and Chair of the National Rock Lobster Management Group he spends time overseas and throughout New Zealand.

When at home, John enjoys boating, fishing and working on community projects such as the Pauatahanui Inlet Community Trust and the Plimmerton Residents' Association. "All sorts of things influence the health of our coasts and harbours. The whole idea is to involve the people who live and work in the catchment as they are the ones whose actions have impact. The committee will have strong support from local authorities, strong technical support from the regional council and firm links in the community. It also has a really good basis from which to work, with many issues identified, planning and development options in place and possible solutions floated by the Porirua Harbour Strategy and Action Plan," says John.

"I am looking forward to contributing what I can to help manage and restore the resources of the catchment in an ecologically sustainable way."



**Warrick Lyon** grew up in Mana, fishing and sailing on the harbour. He continues his close association with Te Awarua-o-Porirua through his work as a NIWA scientist. He is currently studying for a Ph.D. in marine biology. This involves tracking Rig sharks in the harbour and undertaking bio-security, marine life surveys and studies.

Talking to people in the community and school children is part of his work and he enjoys hearing what they are interested in and sharing what he knows about the marine ecosystem. He believes the committee has a unique opportunity to listen, learn and communicate.

"There is still a lot we can learn about what people want from the land and water in the catchment. If we want business and industry to prosper and the harbour to flourish the way to achieve this is to listen and talk to each other. With all the different skills available to us we should be able to

reach a better understanding of what the community wants and achieve better outcomes for all.”

“As a local I feel that the harbour is mine and it is my responsibility to care for it. I am looking forward to working with others who feel the same way,” Warrick says.



**Diane Strugnell** is an occupational therapist and farmer, Diane has lived on Moonshine Road since 1976 and currently runs a 650 acre ‘working farm’. This farm is the starting point for tributaries of the Moonshine and Pauatahanui Streams. Diane is very conscious of the impact her activities can have on the water and the impact that water has on her life.

“I want to understand more about the relationship between the impact of our activities on the water because how we treat it and the benefit it provides is a two way relationship,” Diane says.

She is a member and Treasurer of the Pauatahanui Residents Association executive committee as well as a member of the Large Rural Landowners group, the Moonshine Valley Residents’ Association and was a founding member and Chair of Preserve Pauatahanui.

“Now that I live on the farm I am very conscious of its role in Te Awarua-o-Porirua. Over the years we have lived in Pauatahanui and used the harbour and its environs recreationally – cycling, walking and sailing. I want to ensure others will be able to do so in the future.”



**Councillor David Lee** is an experienced strategic planner, he has worked in central government (NZ Defence Force, NZTA) and local government (Greater Wellington Regional Council, former North Shore City Council) for 25 years.

He has developed a deep understanding of the processes and mechanisms for getting action and results. David is a natural connector, and the relationships he has forged across business, social and community interests are a powerful complement to his government sector know-how. He is a certified RMA Commissioner and is the Climate Change Portfolio Leader at Wellington City Council. Born and raised in Christchurch, David lived in

Auckland before making Wellington his home. He enjoys mountain biking, sailing, golf and DIY.



**Councillor Dale Williams**, is our new Porirua City Council representative on the committee. Dale replaces Bronwyn Kropp. Dale grew up on a Waikato dairy farm and is a motorcycle engineer by trade. He served three terms as Mayor of Otorohanga District – a role covering sensitive and precious harbours, rivers, catchments and tributaries. Working with Iwi, communities, farmers and stakeholders, helping develop sustainable co-management plans for our natural resources, has given him unique experiences and a strong connection to our place. He feels it is a privilege to serve the Porirua community and support the kaitiakitanga of our special environment with Te Awarua-o-Porirua Whaitua Committee



**Larissa Toelupe** came to live in New Zealand from Samoa five years ago seeking greater opportunity for her family. She chose to live in Porirua because this had been her home for several years while she studied at Victoria University.

“I looked at other areas to live but when I came back to Porirua I could easily identify with the people and the environment and I immediately felt at ease and at home,” Larissa says.

She brings skills that are both academic and practical to the committee. She has a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Studies and Geography and was formerly project coordinator for an EU-funded Independent Water Scheme project in Samoa. She is also a trustee for the Porirua Harbour and Catchment Community Trust (PHACCT) and was instrumental in the development of the Samoan documentary on the Porirua Harbour.

“I had experience with water management and community planning and development in Samoa, and I understand how important it is to be familiar with the perceptions of the people you work with. It is vital to choose communication tools that are appropriate to them. It is very rewarding when you see a connection between the community and the subject begin to develop and that is what I hope to achieve in my time on Te Awarua-o-Porirua Whaitua Committee,” says Larissa.



**Councillor Barbara Donaldson** is a long-time resident of Porirua and has always been active in the community. This is her third term as a regional councillor and she holds the position of Chair of the Regional Transport Committee and Sustainable Transport Committee, and a member of Te Upoko Taiao, amongst other roles on Council.

Barbara believes whaitua committees are an important part of the planning process as their decisions will affect the future of the environment.

“This is a new way of doing things where we involve communities in making the rules for their area,” Councillor Donaldson says. “We have strong political backing, expert technical support and a variety of skills and expertise on the committee. It will still be a big learning curve for all of us and will take a lot of hard work and commitment for us to ensure the wider Porirua community is part of the process and we are able to reach a consensus.”

“Ultimately we may have to change the way we do things, but undoubtedly we do have to regulate what we do on land in order to protect our water,” she says.

Meet the Ngāti Toa Rōpu representatives:



**Sharli-Jo Solomon** was chosen to represent Te Rūnanga o Toa Rangatira because of her lifelong passion for the environment. She is animated when she speaks of her life growing up in a playground from Kaitoki to Reikorangi.

“The relationship our whānau have with the land and sea helped shape the people we are today and provided the basis of our commitment to the environment. I am pleased to have the opportunity to represent our iwi,” Sharli-Jo says.

Sharli-Jo believes it is the environment, our harbours, coast and rivers, that make Porirua and the region so beautiful.

“We need growth and development for our future wellbeing and it is up to us to find a way to balance this need with that of the environment. I hope this committee, with the help of the community, can take a big step towards doing that.”



**Jennie Smeaton** is a lifelong resident of Takapūwāhia, Porirua. Her grandfather was baptised in the harbour and she and her siblings grew up with whanau stories based around the land and harbour and the recreation and sustenance it once provided. This history continues with her family still enjoying kayaking and waka ama, and fishing together. Jennie works for the Environmental Protection Authority. She is also a certified Resource Management Hearings commissioner, a member of Te Tau Ihu Fisheries forum, Te Waka a Maui Fisheries forum and the Plimmerton School Board of Trustees.

“The establishment of this committee is important to the harbour revitalisation work that has been done. It adds as an additional forum and strives for positive outcomes as our community changes and impacts on Te Awarua o Porirua,” Jennie says. We need to reach full consensus in our decision making processes. This means that committee members must stay abreast of all aspects and impacts to the Harbour and work with a unified approach to achieve outcomes. A proactive committee open to exploring and seeking out positive environmental outcomes will create flow on effects such as beneficial social outcomes.”