

Auckland Public Meeting - 18 June 2019

NB: These meeting notes record the verbal comments of meeting attendees. The comments were not fact-checked before being recorded here. The comments do not represent the views of the review team or the Ministry for Primary Industries.

Sandra Faulkner (Review Panel Member) – What’s working well?

- Am here in a personal capacity. In process of buying a small section in the midst of iwi owned land and adjacent to DOC land. Trying to knock off sections of Te Araroa. What’s working well are the maps. GIS system is very user friendly. I’m curious about the right to roam, the responsibility that goes with that right is not on the table. Grew up as a townie, had friends on farms. I think of this as more a partnership.
- CEO of Te Araroa Trust: Only been in the role for a year. We have developed a strong relationship with the Commission. Has been good using the resources of the Regional Field Advisers. Long may that continue. Going forward if the time that RFAs are employed was increased that would be good.
- Commission has been a fantastic initiative. It was born in a field of fire. It’s been very well managed by the staff. They have been skilful in developing confidence with the farming community and the outdoors community. They have been limited by their severe underfunding. They have almost been set up not to achieve. Still a lot of challenges. An Otago bred person. Hunter Valley access challenge has tested patience of outdoor communities. A compromise has been reached but it shouldn’t have taken as long as it did. Auckland is one of the fastest growing communities in the country, strapped for cash for outdoor recreation, council not expanding the per capita area that has been established under the Auckland Regional Authority. Since 2010 (amalgamation) outdoor access has stood still. Great to have an RFA in the Auckland region. Our group is trying to get council to invest money in new parks. DOC is working in the islands. A challenge to Wellington is to work better with Auckland Council.
- Sandra Faulkner: Certainly not unique what you’ve said about Auckland Council – councils around the country are strapped for cash.
- Ric Cullinane [CE of NZ Walking Access Commission]: We want people to think about access ways here as long thin regional parks.
- Unformed legal roads considered by 4 wheelers as the last asset available to 4 wheelers to drive on. Heard about unformed legal roads becoming part of walkways – we managed to kill that. As a four wheeler we’ve had good help from the Commission. Back in 2002 we won an Environment Court case and later the Commission helped with that.
- Thinks the Commission has done a terrific job. I was one of the people that thought it was going to be apocalyptic (when Act came in). What’s the angle on the development of walkways? Do they need to be initiated from volunteers? If that’s the case, then volunteers need some recognition in the Act. Also, is the contestable fund (slashed by Bill English) going to be expanded? The Commission has supported Te Araroa terrifically.
- Ric Cullinane: Acknowledge access royalty here. Walkways Commission’s mission was just to create walkways. It was subsumed into DOC and then evaporated into the silos of central government. Essentially the work we do is reactive. We don’t have the resources to do more than that. If a local group is supported by council putting something in – then we don’t need to get involved. We get asked to get involved when things get difficult. A couple of projects around Auckland: where we are working to get access secured before all the houses get put in – active transport, cycleways. We are heading into being more proactive.

Commission can work with access on public and private land. Our success is the breadth of our stride. A contestable fund – ideally the central government politicians will have a look at us and snip a corner off the Provincial Growth Fund and give it to the Commission.

- We promote responsible 4 wheel driving – not knocking over trees in the bush. We plant 5-10,000 trees each year working with other community groups. In Wellington a 4 wheel drive club has an arrangement to take people out into the bush to do trapping. In Coromandel – Maratoto Track – members have planted kauri trees along the track for many years. There is a certain dislike of us sharing the tracks. Act should be named Outdoor Access. Had a member with a disability – he could drive places he couldn't walk. When my daughter was young and barely able to walk we could get places driving. Not all walking tracks should be opened up to 4 wheel driving. Pressure is being put on the limited areas that are left. Waitawheta Track – part owned by DOC part owned by a council. But the Regional Council said if you cause any damage we will hit you under the RMA. It seems to me that the name of the Commission needs to be wider.
- Senior Policy adviser, also a farmer: Really here to listen. Regional Parks – a lot of these are actually farms. There may be opportunities for the Commission to work with the Council to provide access to these. One near Wellsford was donated to the Council.

Sandra Faulkner: Wants to talk about the pressure coming on the Great Walks. For those involved with community tracks are you seeing an upsurge in demand?

- Was on the Puhoi track the other day. Saw Koreans kitted out with walking poles and sunhats the other day. Suspect they were tourists as their English was not good. Tourists are important users of the tracks.
- At Puhoi section of walk– a DOC staff member was stunned by the number of Asian groups. We're planting a paddock as DOC is going to put a campground.

Sandra Faulkner: Are the facilities coping?

- Important to throw money at urban/peri-urban walkways eg. Paekakariki Escarpment Track.
- 4 Wheel driver: concerned about loss of access in the Waitakeres. We need help to get access.
- Ric Cullinane: What is your understanding of what urban dwellers want on their doorstep? We have some tracks near Arrowtown. Some relatively short back country routes with rocks and steep bits. DOC said at one point that because this is near an urban area it needs to be day visitor standard, but the locals didn't want that. In the Auckland area is there demand for a rough track?
- Example of doing 'scrambling' with three boys, then the track became busy – saw a leap up in the number of visitors. My wife and I are looking for opportunities to walk where we don't need to dodge e-bikers.
- Am from Dannevirke – on the Ruahines. My parents are dairy farmers. When a kid could go in the bush for a hunt and there wouldn't be many people there, but now there are more. I like to hunt myself. Walking access with firearms is an interest for me, also protecting farmers from the public free for all. Have been in Auckland for a year. Look up places to take my dog for a walk. Like to feel that I'm not actually in Auckland. Imperative to have an Act in place – some form of mediation, and protection of trees etc... Am here to listen, don't know the ins and outs of the Act and the Commission. Good to hear that there is an in between here. Everyone told me to go for the Waitakeres for a walk, and then now there's

been the closure. We don't inherit the land from our grandparents, we borrow it from our grandchildren.

MPI staff member: Protecting farmers?

- People do use land on her parents' farm without asking. Question of people having a slip up, accident with a firearm, who's liable? Story of next door farmer – hunters don't see any deer in the bush so might take a couple of the farmer's sheep. There are 4 wheel driving and hunting ratbags out there that give 4 wheel drivers and hunters a bad name.

MPI staff member: How to do this better – look after the landowners?

- Am a firm believer in communicate/communicate. Have heard about disappointment that these meetings are being held in such central locations, rather than in the back blocks. Heard through a hunting organisation about this.
- Ric Cullinane: Firearms and animals. The way to improve things is work with bona fide groups – eg Fish & Game – who have a mandate to enforce proper behaviour. Modern technology is going to help with managing permissions – apps on phones. Acknowledge your comments. Haven't actually found a complete idiot free zone anywhere around New Zealand.
- Re: being a farmer in Auckland. There is quite a lot of public access available so don't have a lot of problems with dogs. Re: rough walking tracks. Waiheke Island has a lot of tracks around the coast, and a Forest & Bird reserve closed due to Kauri Dieback. Quite a lot of rough tracks there on Waiheke Island for the public to use.
- Am from Warkworth, part of a number of groups. We live on a farm that runs deer. Workplace health and safety. If someone is on your land and you've told them the hazards, and they have an accident – you're not responsible. The separating out of workplace responsibility and personal responsibility is something that it would be good to make clearer in the revised Act. If you have permission to access, and you leave a gate open – you are responsible.

Sandra Faulkner: There's those of us that drag our children around in the outdoors, but there are large portions of the community that haven't had that opportunity.

- Am interested in the urban environment and educating young people. We are developing an outdoor classroom. At Hobsonville Point have an apartment, see people using a walkway there. Lots of native planting going on there. The ability for people to access outdoor areas locally is very important.

Sandra Faulkner: Those with decreased mobility, vision-impaired, could the Commission be working to help them?

- Talked about a place he went to, not a lot of older people up there as would have to get the bollards to go down to get him up there. My son went to a camp at Piha when he was a child. I don't think that people in South Auckland necessarily have that same opportunity to get out into the countryside.
- As new urban developments go ahead need to have public access as part of them.
- Was born and bred in Auckland. Life member of a fishing organisation. Had a lot to do with fisheries management. [Section] 3(a) in the Act cracks it – it's about the people – don't mess with it. Saw the bit about mentioning economic benefits and am not keen for that to go into the purpose. Where once there were gravel roads there are now sealed roads, change is a

fact of life. It should fall to the Commission to manage that. Restrictions on access is an inevitable part of that. Matapouri pools have had to be closed off – I used to fish there. Just a fact of life. A good place for the Commission to think about managing access, and avoid ambulance at the bottom of the cliff management.

- I see real opportunity for the Commission to have leadership of the sector – it would need to be beefed up. The sector lacks real leadership. There's a real need for leadership.
- MPI staff member: People in South Auckland – buses don't go places. Is there a place in the priorities statement for meeting the needs of underserved populations? Or should there be something in a strategy?
- Can the next iteration of the Act be charged with equitable access? Eg for the disabled.
- Ric Cullinane: In Clevedon and Matakana there is no shortage of resourcing, but still having difficulty getting tracks there. Also working in Otara trying to get a track around the lake. Without will, policy that drives council it's difficult.
- Developers at Hobsonville Point put in good access. In our area we've seen developers come up with lovely plans for parks etc... and then council say take out some of your parks – because we can't afford to manage it. We need to make our buildings small, and our tracks bigger. We don't want an Act that's everything to all people.
- Ric Cullinane: It could be an Act that requires an NPS [National Policy Statement] on access.
- Commission needs to talk to council re: Manukau. Long Bay Regional Park – quite a lot of buses go there. Now good public transport across Auckland.
- A 4 wheel drive club has decided not to access certain areas at certain times.
- Maintenance cost. Te Araroa using unformed legal roads – what sort of budget does the Commission have to keep them maintained?
- Volunteers are important. The Commission needs a proper system to organise volunteers – connecting people, sending working parties to go out.
- Ric Cullinane: There needs to be local contribution, local government contribution and central government contribution to maintenance.

Sandra Faulkner: Wants to do a quick wrap up. Thanks to all of you for contributing. Now need a snapshot about the need for the Act and the Commission and priorities for the Commission.

- Don't hear much about the Act in my job. Priorities should be promoting the work of the Commission and walks available.
- The Act has worked largely because of the staff. Like to see it continue. Need to retain wide use of unformed legal roads. They are the life blood of New Zealand.
- Didn't know about the Act before tonight. Keep it focused on the people. Future management goals, Education.
- Important to have something like this in place. No specific priority. Work on the funding.
- Outdoor Access Act should be the name – not looking after NZ. Ric [Cullinane], your priorities are great.
- Name change needed to reflect what doing. Do need an Act. First priority is future proofing, not just securing enduring access, also creating new access as our city spreads. The more people can access the outdoors without getting in the car, the better. Don't want to have to wait to the annual holidays to get that spiritual thing you need. Careful that you don't word things that every track needs to be made accessible for those with disabilities.
- CEO Of Te Araroa Trust: Act definitely needed. Commission should have a leadership role.
- Commission should be strengthened – its independence. Concerned about its modest funding. Education important. IT important for providing info to tourists. Commission needs

to get on to talking to tourists about appropriate behaviour. No one has mentioned philanthropy here. A lot of regional parks in Auckland have been partially funded by philanthropy. Not just polo players, farmers. Wondering whether walking access are a primary industry. Is MPI the right government department to administer? What is the appropriate government agency? Not particularly persuaded that MPI is the right one – it was a good choice at the start. With the urban interest discussed today....

- Sandra Faulkner: Which government department to administer?
- I don't know.
- Absolutely essential. There's been a big change in the culture about access – and I think the Commission has been part of that. Funding – more needed for the Commission. Maybe the tourist tax could put some money into the Commission.
- Only been in the country 2 weeks. Not going to say anything.
- Want a range of different walkways. Access for all and education crucial.
- In 1996 worked for a commission in a marketing/communications role. In the digital age a little bit of money can go a long way. Commission doing a great job. It should be future-proofed. Support the view about enabling local ability and capacity.
- Thought the Act didn't apply to 4 wheel drivers, just found out recently it does. Should be renamed.

MPI staff member: Thank you to everyone for coming and the level of engagement in the meeting. Got a lot of solutions out of tonight.

MPI staff member: Submissions process: close on 2 July. Survey monkey, email, and post. Review will make recommendations. Likely to be another consultation process if significant changes are recommended.