

Report to the Tūpuna Maunga o Tāmaki Makaurau Authority

November 2016

Friends of Maungawhau (FoM) is an incorporated society which has been active on Maungawhau/Mt Eden for the past 20 years. We are a community group of about 300 members and 15 active volunteers. We meet every Tuesday morning to remove invasive exotic plants, bring back the natural native flora and maintain tracks in the west and south of the maunga.

We have also been advocates for improved management of Maungawhau and have engaged on wider issues impacting public parks and open space in Tāmaki Makaurau.

We wish to congratulate the Maunga Authority on the completion of its first term. As people working on the front line we are pleased to see the many improvements achieved in the first two years of the Authority. Our relationships with Council staff and contractors have been excellent. It is hoped our efforts can be used as a reference when volunteer groups evolve on other maunga.

We report the sad loss of Dr Susan Bulmer who established FoM and was its first chair. She was a highly regarded archaeologist and a great advocate for the maunga.

We recognise the immense challenges ahead and we wish to make the following points:

- 1 Three full-time staff are inadequate to deal with the challenges and work facing all the maunga. New approaches, such as active involvement of kaitiaki and honorary or volunteer rangers, are necessary. Kit Howden represented New Zealand at the International Rangers Congress earlier this year and reported at a subsequent public meeting in Mt Eden that a collaborative approach is essential in managing protected cultural heritage sites. More on-the-ground effort is needed, mainly in education and volunteer leadership.
- 2 Public open space in Auckland is under increasing pressure. In the limited areas where we work as volunteers we see increasing track and slope erosion, worsening desire lines and safety issues. Dog management is becoming a major point of conflict on some maunga.

Unless long-term initiatives are taken, the shortage of suburban parks in Tāmaki Makaurau means the maunga will be increasingly used as local or neighbourhood parks for informal recreation. To our knowledge, the long-term impacts on sensitive cultural heritage sites and conservation areas has not been considered. The Auckland Unitary Plan Independent Hearings Panel merely acknowledged that "open space will be under greater pressure from a growing and more dense Auckland, and that as a result open space will need to be multi-functional."

- 3 FoM works closely with contractors and staff on weed and pest plant control. However, ecological rehabilitation and maintenance of desired vegetation after weed removal needs urgent attention. We are concerned about secondary, harder-to-control weeds regenerating once initial target weeds are controlled. For example, where Japanese honeysuckle has been removed, ivy and

agapanthus can occupy the exposed habitat. It is difficult to control these species manually; they may require herbicides.

FoM volunteers have helped with the trial plantings of scoria-cone species at Ambury Regional Park. While this work offers direction, more herbaceous species trialled on site are needed. Unfortunately, regulatory processes have prevented planting over the last few years. This is being addressed now, but in our opinion the costly, elaborate approval system needs review.

- 4 There are many places on Maungawhau where volunteers cannot work due to potential hazards, the instability of the steep quarry slope, and the size of the maunga. We confine ourselves to the smaller, damaged areas where restoration will take many years. Volunteer work in these areas needs to be better integrated with contracted work in other areas.
- 5 FoM has supported groups such as Three Kings Community Action, Friends of Regional Parks, Save Our Unique Heritage (SOUL) and the International Rangers Federation (Thin Green Line Foundation). Core members are involved in the Pest Management Liaison Group and have attended training courses. We are fortunate to have volunteers who are knowledgeable about ecology and botany, such as Sel Arbuckle who also has an interest in the nursery. However, volunteers would welcome more guidance in archaeology, cultural education and Māori protocol in the work we do.
- 6 FoM submissions to the Unitary Plan Independent Hearings Panel had some effect. We were pleased that the Panel acknowledged our evidence on viewshafts in their final report. This is a matter that the Maunga Authority may wish to follow up with Council:

Also in regard to local views and potentially new regional viewshafts, the Panel was impressed by the evidence of Mr Howden for the Friends of Maungawhau and his highlighting of the importance of the sequence of views from the Coast-to-Coast Auckland Walkway and the Te Araroa National Walkway. He submitted that active tourism including walking is a rapidly growing economic opportunity and that views from regionally and nationally significant walkways could also be included in any future work programme by the Council to identify new regional and local public views.

<http://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/EN/planspoliciesprojects/plansstrategies/unitaryplan/Documents/ihprecommendations/ihp020viewshafts.pdf>

FoM volunteers continue to meet every Tuesday morning under the guidance of Jean Barton and Keith Ayton. Social meetings, contact with “roving volunteers” and volunteering on the wider boundaries of Maungawhau and elsewhere are features that keep volunteers together. April Glenday continues as secretary. Kit Howden has resigned as chair and has moved on to other park issues. Like many volunteer groups, the society is now going through a transition and its future is unknown.

We thank the Authority for your support and especially the Council staff under Scott de Silva's leadership.