

**IN THE MATTER OF** the Resource Management Act 1991

**AND**

**IN THE MATTER OF** seven publicly notified resource consent applications by Te Tūāpapa Kura Kāinga – the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (**MHUD**) to the Rotorua Lakes Council

---

**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF PAUL ROMANES**

---

**Introduction**

1. My name is Paul Romanes. I'm 37, I was born in Rotorua and am proud to call this town my home to this day. I have three small children aged 4, 7 and 9.
  
2. I have lived at various locations across the city including the last 15 years in the Glenholme & Fenton Park areas (either side of Fenton Street). My life is here, in Rotorua I have friends and family, own properties, have a business, staff and three quickly growing children.
  
3. My evidence will address:
  - (a) My concerns about the new applications for contracted emergency housing and the ongoing adverse effects that emergency housing continues to cause for Rotorua.
  
  - (b) My involvement in the community liaison group.

4. I am familiar with the matters set out in this brief of evidence, and they are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

### **Reason for involvement**

5. I made a submission at the initial hearing for these consents in late 2022. I did this because Rotorua is important to me, it's where I was born and grew up, I have spent a lot of time outside of Rotorua living and working all around NZ and the world but there is no place like home or the feeling I get when I return here.
6. From 2017-2023 I lived on the corner of Fenton and Marguerita Street and had an office on Fenton Street opposite the police station. I witnessed first hand on an hourly basis the destruction that emergency housing brought to my town, my neighbourhood and all of our lives.
7. The decision to make a submission at the previous hearing was not a decision, there simply was no other option, I had first hand experience of living, commuting and working in the epicentre of Rotorua's emergency housing and it was important that the commissioners had my experience to inform their decision.
8. I wouldn't be able to count the number of 111 calls I made after emergency housing took over my suburb, outside my house I witnessed numerous domestic violence incidents, car chases, fights, yelling, theft and general unruly behaviour all hours of the day and night, often in front of my three small children. I simply never saw any before this fiasco started.
9. I believed that once the commissioners had heard all of our first-hand witness accounts of life alongside emergency housing there would be no way that the consents would be granted, based on the facts alone it would never be allowed to continue.

10. I have not made a submission this time around because when the consents were granted and emergency housing at these motels became legal, I felt let down by the system and generally disillusioned with the entire scenario.
11. Given my previous submission was ignored and nothing had changed I thought there was little point in wasting any more of my energy on this topic, I imagine this is all lip service, the status quo will continue, and Rotorua will continue its decline at an alarming rate.

### **Involvement with Community Liaison Group**

12. I applied and was successful in becoming one of the three community liaison representatives, with this I regained some optimism that I could do my bit to help make the most of a bad situation for Rotorua. I attended the meetings on 9 March 2023, 8 June 2023, 7 September 2023, 28 February 2024, 26 June 2024 and 26 September 2024.
13. I think the requirement to have a community liaison group was well intentioned by the Commissioners but in reality it really was a waste of time. I think I can comfortably speak for the three of us when I say that I felt disillusioned with the process and meetings. Every attempt to contribute or ask questions was stonewalled, there was a lack of information or excuses by all parties, generally the response was that they were not the right person to comment and that person wasn't at the meeting so there would be no response at all.
14. It became apparent that the group perceived our role as merely to feed information back to the community. We weren't there to work proactively towards any solutions or pass feedback from the community back to the group, but merely to pass on whatever we were told as supposed facts, although facts were very hard to come by.

15. I would like acknowledge that after 12 months of us requesting that different staff attend the meetings, JP Gaston from Rotorua Lakes Council began attending and his presence has been a huge improvement - he speaks with facts, authority, and never shys away from a question.

### **Ongoing impacts on Rotorua**

16. After the consents were granted and 12 months of community liaison group meetings I was broken, I accepted the fate of Rotorua's golden mile and CBD and moved on with my life. I moved out of my Fenton Street office, sold my house on Marguerita Street and moved across town to Lynmore.
17. I now live and work in Lynmore, I now only need to go into Rotorua's CBD to frequent the rock-climbing gym on Hinemoa Street. I still see the ongoing effects of the emergency housing when I visit the CBD. For some recent context, when I walked out of the climbing gym at 8pm in mid-September 2024, our car was blocked in by 6 police cars and the paddy wagon loading at least 10 (we lost count) people in the back that had been fighting on the streets.

### **Conclusion**

18. I'm pleased that Restore Rotorua has provided the opportunity for me to make a statement as I still want to support Rotorua - there must be still a small fire left burning inside me that thinks Rotorua can recover from its current situation.
19. I do not believe the resource consent conditions are working and that MHUD is serious about exiting all motels. I have found the community liaison group ineffectual and there does not seem to be a commitment from MHUD to properly engage with the community or take our concerns seriously. I believe that approach will continue if the new resource consents are granted and I

worry that we will be back here in another year for a third resource consent application.

20. Based on what I have discussed above I respectfully request that the seven CEH are declined.

**Paul Romanes**

**30 October 2024**