

Warkworth hosts co-governance opposition meeting

Opponents of co-governance – the shared decision-making arrangement between iwi and government and local government – aired their views at a Unify NZ meeting at the Warkworth Town Hall on July 30.

About 100 people attended to hear Auckland Council Councillor John Watson, Hobson Pledge representative Casey Costello and Groundswell organiser Scott Bright address the topic, 'Democracy Not Co-Governance – What's At Stake?'. Cr Watson, who is an Albany Ward representative, spoke about his involvement with the Hauraki Gulf Forum, which is co-chaired by tangata whenua and Auckland Council representatives.

Watson covered his concerns about the expansion in the forum's powers and its make-up of 50 per cent mana whenua. He said as a result of his opposition to a proposal to include regional parks into the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park, put forward last year, he had received a threatening letter from the co-chairs and subsequently, a Code of Conduct complaint. The complaint was eventually dismissed as groundless, he said.

"Codes of Conduct are being weaponised against elected representatives to shut them up," he said. Casey Costello said the government needed to be questioned on why it was inserting race components "where they

do not belong", such as in health, water, science, local government, transport "and the list goes on".

"We are in a situation where those who are brave enough to question the legitimacy of the concept of co-governance are accused of race-baiting," she said. "The debate has been necessary as there is an increasing effort to legitimise race-based governance as if it is a credible and an improved form of management."

Groundswell's Scott Bright says farmers are being knocked down with unnecessary and unworkable regulations, and are being hit by over-reaching compliance which is designed to take everything from them including "their enthusiasm, their spirit



Auckland Councillor John Watson, who represents the Albany Ward, claimed Auckland Council was weaponising Codes of Conduct to silence councillors.



Members of the audience were keen to discuss their concerns with Groundswell organiser Scott Bright.

and their farm".

He talked about the impacts of Significant Natural Areas on crop farmers, Three Waters and the Water Services Bill. On the carbon tax, he said it had been calculated that it would cost farmers 11 cents a kilogram or \$250 per cow or beef cattle per year.

"That means that the average farmer with 400 cows will have to find an extra \$100,000 a year to pay the tax."

The meeting was chaired by Rodney Councillor Greg Sayers and a second meeting on the topic Democracy Not Co-Governance will be held on Sunday, August 21, again at the town hall. It will be addressed by NZ First leader Winston Peters.