

IN THE MATTER OF the Resource Management Act 1991

AND

IN THE MATTER OF 13 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 MAXWELL BRUCE ROLLY ROLSTON, Q SM, JP (RETD)

Introduction

1. My full name is Maxwell Bruce Rolly Rolston. I used to reside in Glenholme, Rotorua (my “**home**”) up until 10 April 2022 and lived there for around 23 years.
2. I submit this statement of evidence from my perspective as a retired army veteran who resided in Glenholme for 23 years. My evidence covers the adverse changes I saw and experienced around central Rotorua as a result of the existing concentrated motel-style emergency housing in central Rotorua. Specifically anti-social behaviour, increased violence, and crime around the town. I also speak to specific incidents that I have personally encountered and changes in my daily routine I have had to adopt for my own personal safety.
3. This statement of evidence is an update to my statement of evidence that has been submitted and dated 16 December 2021.

4. The experiences outlined in my statement of evidence led to my decision to move away from Glenholme and relocate to Papamoa. I was forced to make this decision as I feared for my personal safety.
5. The existing transitional and emergency housing motels will have a compounding effect with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (**MHUD**)'s thirteen applications for motels. I understand that these sites are currently being used as transitional and emergency housing while the owners await the outcome of these applications. This will mean that the unsafe situation I faced will become permanent and intensify.
6. Trevor Newbrook, Chair of Restore Rotorua Incorporated (**Restore Rotorua**), has shared a list of confirmed emergency housing accommodation locations with me that was provided by the Ministry of Social Development in 2021. This list confirms my knowledge of the widespread use of emergency housing accommodation in central Rotorua.
7. My evidence speaks to the thirteen resource consent applications.
8. I submit this brief of evidence, in support of Restore Rotorua, to assist the independent Panel who I am informed will decide on the question of whether all of MHUD's resource consent applications before the Council to convert motels in central Rotorua into emergency housing should be granted.
9. 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. As a member of Restore Rotorua, I am prepared if required to answer any questions concerning this brief of evidence from the Panel.

Family, work and life in Rotorua

10. I bought a house in Rotorua in 1988 and moved to Rotorua in 1989 after retiring from the NZ Army, when I was 36 years old. I am currently 69 years old.

11. Prior to retirement I worked as the Secretary/Manager of Rotorua Royal New Zealand Returned and Services' Association (**Rotorua RSA**, formerly located at 1072 Haupapa Street, Rotorua) for 23 years until 2013. I was also a Justice of the Peace (**JP**) from 1990 until 2018. In 2000, I received a service medal for my services rendered to the Rotorua community.

12. By way of background I joined the New Zealand Army as a 16 year old cadet in 1970, where I completed my training at Waiouru. After graduating from cadets I joined the Electrical and Mechanical Engineering branch of the Army, where my role predominantly involved administrative roles for a period of 17 years. This included service in Singapore and Malaysia classified as Operational, also in England and Germany while based with the NZ Defence Attaché in London. I served in the Army for 20 years from 1970 to 1989, where I made Warrant Officer Class 1 then got commissioned as a Captain. My main role during my last 8 years with the New Zealand Army was in personnel management, which involved deployments. I was recently awarded the New Zealand Operational Service Medal for this operational service some 48 years after qualifying. I purchased a house in Rotorua at 42 Petrie Street, Pomare, Rotorua in 1987. From 1987 to 1989 I commuted back and forth to Waiouru every week from that house in Rotorua, until my retirement from the New Zealand Army in December 1989.

Community engagements in Rotorua in general and through my role as secretary manager at the Rotorua RSA from 1990 to 2013

13. At the Rotorua RSA, I intended to study to be able to be on the bench as a Serving Justice, but as one of the committee members was a JP he agreed to look after the JP Association and I would concentrate on RSA matters. Annexed and marked as Appendix 1 is a 2013 article from the Rotorua Daily Post highlighting my tenure at the Rotorua RSA.

14. My role as the secretary manager at the Rotorua RSA involved a lot of community work, including:
- (a) Looking after the cadet units in town;
 - (b) Assisting the elderly;
 - (c) Providing wheelchair services for the veterans;
 - (d) Providing home and housing visits for sick veterans and their families;
 - (e) Dealing with war pensions and welfare for veterans;
 - (f) Doing the accounting for the sub-clubs, arranging their files so they were ready for audit and ensuring the sub-clubs were financially viable with no misappropriation taking place;
 - (g) Attending Rotorua Lakes Council JP clinics and at my office when required (a lot of people came to my office because I had an open door policy); and
 - (h) Sorting out everything else going on in the club.
15. I retired in 2013 due to executive burnout at the age of 59.
16. From 1990 to 2018, I was an advisor, then patron and mentor to the Rotorua Senior Citizens at the Bell Marino Lounge, Rotorua Racing Club. I pulled out at the same time as retirement from the Rotorua RSA due to health reasons.
17. I spend a lot of time with the Army cadets, the air force cadets and youth justice system, particularly around ANZAC day.

18. I still undertake some war pension work, mainly for contemporary veterans (both locally in Rotorua and nationally) returning from Afghanistan and Timor, suffering from poor mental health. The reason I do this is that the local Rotorua RSA do not have the requisite knowledge to assist the veterans in this area.
19. I still advise on military matters when called on.
20. Until my shift to Papamoa, I was housing a war veteran from Afghanistan, suffering from PTSD at my home. I offered him a home for home detention as his alternative was to go to prison. I do this as I have empathy for war veterans, given my father had a bad experience in World War 2 in which half his face was blown off and suffered severely from what was then known as 'shell shock'.
21. I have housed other Rotorua homeless in the past at my home, giving them a bed, a feed and trying to help them get back on their feet.

Observations near home from 2001 to March/April 2020

22. In 2001, I sold the house I had purchased in 1987 in 42 Petrie Street, Pomare, Rotorua and purchased my Glenholme home, which was brand new at the time. I was 48 when I moved into my home in Glenholme. At that time, I was a younger man relative to the rest of the Glenholme community, who were noticeably elderly and retired.
23. At the time of moving into Glenholme, the neighbourhood was fairly peaceful and quiet. This house was to be my forever home. It was thermally heated and had duplicate services both upstairs and down in case I was unable to access stairs.
24. During 2001 to 2019, I would say that Glenholme was characteristically a pleasant and affluent part of the city. Fenton Street, as was then commonly referred to as the "Golden Mile" was a clean, neat and tidy street with well-

maintained motels based on their outside frontage. I was proud back then to tell visitors coming to see me to enter Carnot Street via Fenton Street.

25. During this period I would:
- (a) Regularly walk along Carnot Street and then down Fenton Street either to the Pak'nSave (corner of Fenton Street and Amohau Street) or the Countdown Rotorua (246 Fenton Street, Victoria, Rotorua);
 - (b) Regularly take my grandchildren for a walk from my home to McDonalds (corner of Fenton Street and Amohau Street) and/or the Rotorua Central Mall (1170 Amohau Street, Rotorua);
 - (c) Regularly walk to the RSA in town on a Friday to socialise with friends and/or work and then return home by foot after dark around 10pm; and
 - (d) Leave my windows open on the east side of my house during summer nights.

Emergence of transitional housing in Rotorua

26. The influx of people requiring transitional housing in central Rotorua appeared around the time the homeless were transferred from Kuirau Park (the park with thermal pools, close to the Rotorua Hospital in the north west corner of central Rotorua) into transitional housing on or around the time of the first Covid lockdown.
27. To the best of my knowledge, as the country was in lockdown during that March/April 2020 period, I did not notice the influx of emergency housing in central Rotorua had appeared until after restrictions had ended. Upon the restrictions ending I was able to go outside freely and see the surrounding

neighbourhood, which had become unsightly, noisy and heavily populated in a way that the motels traditionally did not with tourist guests.

General Observations near home since March/April 2020

28. My Glenholme home was a double storey house. Both my bathroom window and second bedroom window were located upstairs and faced eastward directly onto Fenton Street. In essence, I could make observations about the portion of Fenton Street that was directly visible from home, and I can confirm that many of my general observations were commonplace or daily occurrences.
29. Since the March/April 2020 lockdown, I regularly saw outside Malones Motel young couples engaged in volatile domestic arguments, with their children not far from them. While I was at home, I could frequently hear the yelling of profanities from outside the motels near the corner of Carnot Street and Fenton Street.
30. Outside the Four Canoes Hotel (273 Fenton Street, Rotorua), I have seen young women who appear to be moving about on the street while intoxicated with their companions standing by just watching them. It is reminiscent of a scene out of the film *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. On occasions members of that group will make racist and rude comments to any person passing by. The group referred to me as white pr**ck and a white c**t on several occasions. After experiencing this interaction with the same group of people a number of times, I avoided walking out in this direction.
31. I witnessed during the warmer months, in the middle of the day, large gatherings of people approximately 30 in size getting drunk in the backyard of Four Canoes Hotel.

32. I noticed an increased police presence on Fenton Street. Prior to 2020 it was a rare occasion that I would see a police car on patrol or activating its sirens to attend to an emergency.
33. I also noticed many motel premises along Fenton Street with compound fences and guards posted outside, which reminds me of Germany during World War II or a military coup. The increased security is off-putting and feels out of place for a suburb such as Glenholme.
34. I heard loud music and arguments from my bedroom, coming from Fenton Street on many nights, with the noise persisting on many occasions until 2:00am. My bedroom is on the second storey floor, so the noise emanating from Fenton Street motels makes its way directly to my bedroom.
35. I saw many broken down cars with patched up windows along Fenton Street, which detracts from the former image of the "Golden Mile". I did not feel comfortable taking photographs to annex to my statement given I had genuine concerns for my safety if I did take pictures.
36. On Fenton Street, I have seen on one occasion a lady emptying her boil up pot onto the main road gutter, with what looks to be discarded food scraps. This is not a pleasant sight to see and generally brings down the character of the street. It is a shame to see food wasted in this fashion, which is not good for the environment.

Specific Observations since March/April 2020

37. Since 2020, there was a distinct red sedan parked outside the Aaryn Court Budget Motel (281 Fenton Street), which is on the corner of Carnot Street and Fenton Street. What was striking about this sight is that any driver heading northbound on Fenton Street passing this corner will notice a large dog chained to the side of the car, with a feeding bowl and blanket while the back

passenger door remains open. As I lived on Carnot Street, I passed this corner almost on a daily basis and I noticed that this dog remained chained to this car for over 12 months. Although the dog appears to be well looked after and is getting fed, it is still animal cruelty.

38. New Zealand Army reunions have been held in Rotorua on an annual basis in November/December since 1990, with about 150 to 200 veterans in attendance each year. For the past two consecutive years, many of my former Army colleagues who have attended the Army reunions for the last 20 to 30 years have called me (in my capacity as an organiser of the reunion) either:
- (a) Asking where they can stay in Rotorua, given they are aware of the generally negative media coverage of Rotorua motels; or
 - (b) Indicating to me that they do not wish to attend the Army reunion given safety concerns from the influx of transitional and emergency housing in the central Rotorua motels.
39. On one occasion in October 2021, I witnessed a couple having a domestic argument in their motel. They saw me watch them and yelled out “what are you looking at you white c**t”.
40. A similar incident occurred on a Sunday afternoon in November 2021 as I was returning home from the Rotorua Central Mall along Euston Street. A woman came out of Victoria Lodge. I politely said “good afternoon” to the woman, who in reply aggressively yelled “F**off you white c**t”. A true copy of a map showing the location of this incident is annexed and marked as Appendix 2.
41. In August 2021 I was at the Rotorua Central mall during the day and witnessed a 14 to 15 year old boy get into trouble with a security guard at the Rotorua Central Mall for riding his skateboard inside the Mall. The security guard directed the boy to leave the Mall, at which point the boy swung his skateboard

at the security guard's head. The security guard then confiscated the boy's skateboard and advised him that they would give it to the police. The boy then proceeded to tell the security guard that he was going home to get his uncle, who was in a gang. The boy then proceeded to go into BK's Rotorua Motor Lodge across the road about 160 metres away and a large man returned with the boy. The large man questioned the security guard as to what happened and the security guard informed him that the boy had tried to hit him in the head with the skateboard. The large individual then turned to the boy yelling at him to the effect "You are going back to your sister boy. You are not staying here anymore". The police then arrived about 30 minutes later. A true copy of a map showing the location of this incident is annexed and marked at Appendix 2. I was shocked by how long it took for the police to arrive. By attending to the situation 30 minutes later, the police could not do anything effective.

42. In November 2021, I had just come out of the Amohau Street entrance of the Rotorua Central Mall and was crossing Amohau Street to head down Tutanekai Street at the lights there. While crossing Amohau Street I encountered a Māori male who yelled at me "What are you looking at you white c**t", when I was not even looking in his direction. I told the man that if he carried on like that I would ring the police. The individual then proceeded to harass another man who appeared to be 10 years my senior, also with a barrage of racist comments. I rang the police, however it took too long for the police to arrive to make a difference. After the police arrived the officer informed me that the individual lived in one of the motels across from the Rotorua Central Mall, however they would not disclose which one. A true copy of a map showing the location of this incident is annexed and marked as Appendix 2.

My response to events post transitional housing

43. Given my general observations since April 2020, I avoided walking to either Pak'nSave (corner of Fenton Street and Amohau Street) or the Countdown Rotorua shop (246 Fenton Street, Victoria, Rotorua) due to safety concerns. If

I needed to go to the supermarket I took a vehicle and avoided Fenton Street by going down Lytton Street straight to the Countdown inside Rotorua Central Mall. Similarly I no longer directed visitors coming to see me to come down Fenton Street. It is a real shame I could no longer walk to the supermarket as both the Countdown and Pak N Save were only a 900 metre distance from my home.

44. I go for walks as needed for general health and fitness but I was genuinely concerned for my safety when I went out. Glenholme is a planned suburb with a grid street layout and ordinarily has many alternative options when getting from one place to the other. The presence of transitional housing in motel sites near my home confined my walks to one or two specific routes, in order to limit my proximity to any motel with Emergency Housing occupants. If I went down Lytton Street, there was only one motel I needed to pass, which I could avoid by keeping to the other side of the street. By contrast on Fenton Street there are multiple motels on opposite sides of the street, located in highly populated areas, making it hard to avoid motels, hence I decided to avoid Fenton Street altogether.
45. I no longer kept my windows open during the warmer nights so that I did not hear swearing and loud arguments taking place on Fenton Street during the nights, which was never an issue before April 2020.
46. I resumed meeting with friends at The Lakehouse Tavern (41 Lake Road, Ohinemutu, Rotorua), a pub in town on a Friday, in late 2021, however I no longer returned home after dark and I made sure to take a vehicle there and back.

Joining Restore Rotorua

47. I met Restore Rotorua spokesperson Trevor Newbrook through my former New Zealand Army colleague and close friend Peter Breen. Trevor told me

about Restore Rotorua and asked if I would be interested in commenting and I advised that I would.

Moving to Papamoa

48. I sold my Glenholme property on 10 April 2022 and moved to Papamoa.
49. My main reasons for moving to Papamoa was for my personal safety and for those who visited me, additionally, during the sale process a number of potential buyers would not even look in this area. Between November 2021 and February 2022 my expectations for a sale price dropped from \$930K to \$800K. Whilst I am advised that property values are not directly relevant to resource consent applications, to my mind this is an indication of the drop in desirability of the area.

Conclusion

50. Whilst I do not regret moving from Rotorua, because of the behaviour patterns that have emerged, I am annoyed that I have been deprived of the ability to see my children and grandchildren as they still reside in Rotorua.
51. I love Rotorua and lived there for 35 years. When I advised my family and friends that I was leaving I was met with disbelief. Everybody thought my next move would have been to a funeral home.
52. I have seen Rotorua rise from obscurity under the term of Mayor Graham Hall and I hope that Rotorua can recreate itself once again, once these issues are sorted.

Maxwell Bruce Rolly Rolston

12 October 2022

ROTORUA DAILY POST

Rolly ends long, dedicated tenure at Rotorua RSA

27 Apr, 2013 09:00 AM 2 minutes to read

Rotorua Daily Post

By: Katie Holland, katie.holland@dailypost.co.nz

Rolly Rolston has devoted himself to the Rotorua RSA for 23 years and now it's time for a well-earned rest.

Mr Rolston will retire as manager/secretary on Tuesday, in his words "to sit back and smell the roses".

"The last three years have been stressful, particularly with the financial climate," he said. "I need to look after my health ... I am sad to go but I know I need to so I don't join the cemetery too soon!"

After 20 years in the army, Mr Rolston left when he was 36 and took up the RSA job.

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"I planned to just do two years [at the RSA] but every time I went to move on something exciting happened, there was always some project to get on with."

He said his predecessor told him the hardest thing would be finding something to do every day.

"I am still waiting for that day," he laughed. "It's been 24/7, always on call."

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Despite the stresses of recent years, Mr Rolston believes the 97-year-old Rotorua branch is in a good place, with 350 veterans and 410 service people. "We're in good heart, people are happy."

Mr Rolston said one of the most rewarding parts of his job had been helping veterans get welfare and war pensions they were entitled to.

He's also worked with young people at the youth remand centre and cadet forces and acted as guardian for members in rest homes.

Then there are the friendships - "it's like going to a party every day."

There have been downsides too. "The hard part is seeing so many people die. Probably 2000 RSA people have died since I have been here. I can go around and show you where they all used to sit."

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Mr Rolston, who was awarded a Queen's Service Medal 11 years ago, said his only regret was not getting the RSA a new building.

In retirement he plans to "just enjoy life", spending time with family and making the most of his bach and fishing boat at Maketu.

RSA members and friends will farewell Mr Rolston at a morning tea on Tuesday.

"I will probably have a tear in my eye," he said. "I'm going to miss the place - I've been coming here every day for 23 years."

Mr Rolston said he wanted to thank the public for its generous support over the years.

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