



Submission on Proposed Far North District Plan

Form 5 submission on publically notified proposal for policy statement or plan, change or variation

Clause 6 of Schedule 1, Resource Management Act 1991

To: Far North District Council - District Planning

Date received: 21/10/2022

This is a submission on the following proposed plan (the **proposal**): Proposed Far North District Plan

Address for service:

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I wish to be heard: No

I am willing to present a joint case: No

Could you gain an advantage in trade competition in making this submission?

- **No**

Are you directly affected by an effect of the subject matter of the submission that

(a) adversely affects the environment; and

(b) does not relate to trade competition or the effects of trade competition

- **No**

Submission points

Point 50.1 **S254.001, S254.002, S254.003, S254.004,
S254.005, and S254.006**

Section: General approach

Sentiment: Oppose

Submission:

The specific provisions of the Plan that my submission relates to are:

We have found it difficult to work out which sections relate to dogs and dog owners, and fear that we will miss some clause or policy that has a negative impact on our furry family members.

The specific provisions of the Plan that our submission relates to are, as far as we can tell, listed below:

Any objectives, sections, policies, rules, regulations, practice notes, and supporting documentation which relates to **wellbeing, dog owners, dogs, the banning of dogs and cats (via resource consent conditions, covenants or consent notices), the impact of dogs on the environment, kennels, sub-divisions, dogs and their relationship with native flora and fauna, significant natural areas, zoning which limits dog ownership, and dog limits placed on Significant Natural Areas (SNAs).**

This includes but is not limited to:

- Not currently in the documentation, but critical for review: the 'Practice Note For Significant Indigenous Flora and Fauna' and the 'Bay of Islands Kiwi Distribution Map Support Document'. Part 2, District Wide Matters, Strategic Direction, Economic, and social wellbeing: all social prosperity objectives, and Natural Environment: SDEP06.
- Any section which mentions pets, and/or pests (where dogs have been named pests).
- Any sections which state the aim is to "Encourage and support active management of pest plants and animals" or "Require landowners to manage pets and pest species to avoid risks to threatened indigenous species."
- Subdivision section, SUB-R3, CON-2.
- IB-02: Indigenous biodiversity is managed to maintain its extent and diversity in a way that provides for the social, economic and cultural well-being of people and communities.
- IB-P7: Encourage and support active management of pest plants and pest animals.
- IB-P9: Require landowners to manage pets and pest species, including dogs, cats, possums, rats and mustelids, to avoid risks to threatened indigenous species, including avoiding the introduction of pets and pest species into kiwi present or high-density kiwi areas.
- IB-P10 and all subsections: Manage land use and subdivision to address the effects of the activity requiring resource consent for indigenous vegetation clearance and associated land disturbance, including (but not limited to) consideration of the following matters where relevant to the application: (including all clauses).
- Part 3, Appendices - APP3 – Subdivision management plan criteria, including (i) measures to protect, manage and enhance indigenous vegetation and habitats, ONL and ONF, heritage resources and riparian margins, including appropriate means of controlling dogs, cats, rats, mustelids and other animal pests and the means of controlling pest plants.

Official records of recent FNDC decisions on consenting issues, confirmed the District Plan provisions are being over-ridden by practise notes. The content of the known notes is not reflected in the proposed DP, and the notes have not been disclosed. That prevents an accurate assessment of the impact of the District Plan on individuals or the district, and raises questions about the statutory compliance and integrity of the consultation process and outcomes. In addition, there is no identification of SNA's or the "Kiwi" areas referred to in the clauses mentioned above, that also makes it impossible to properly understand and assess the impact of the DP on individuals and or the district. I ask Council to make those critical documents, and all other undisclosed relevant information, publicly available now. Two such critical documents are:

- The 'Practice Note for Significant Indigenous Flora and Fauna', and
- The 'Bay of Islands Kiwi Distribution Map – Support Document'.

Relief sought

My submission is:

I am hopeful that our newly elected Council will mark a watershed in terms of how FNDC chooses to act towards residents who own dogs; we comprise up to half of this district.

Our dogs are our family members, best friends, counsellors, workmates, pig hunters, and brilliant farmhands. Cats are family to many people, especially the elderly. I do not accept that FNDC has a right to ban and restrict me and my family from owning pets responsibly, anywhere in Northland

FNDC management's choices to ban and restrict dog owners for two decades indicates that they have not considered the unintended consequences of their actions.

Those consequences include:

- negative economic impacts on our rohe in terms of housing and worker availability,
- humanitarian and mental health crises with people having to relinquish pets,
- animal rescue services and pounds being overwhelmed with dogs and cats, and financially stressed
- animal rescue services being unable to find land which is suitably zoned for them to base their operations,
- fewer children living in homes which have dogs and cats, which means they will increase their risk of harm from dogs because they will not learn how to care for, respect, and control their dogs,
- increase in the number of dogs and cats being dumped in the bush due to lack of available rentals, which has a potentially serious impact on native wildlife,
- negative impact on real estate agents and developers, by reducing their potential buyer/tenant markets, even when they offer FNDC multiple means by which potential owners could control dogs effectively in high density kiwi areas (e.g. fencing, registration, micro-chipping, and de-sexing requirements),
- reduction in tourism from family members who own dogs deciding not to travel North, as their parents live in areas where their dogs are not allowed,
- reduction in tourism from dog-owners who are sight-seeing, as Northland's reputation for anti-dog attitudes grows,
- less positive view of our district as a retirement area,
- legal implications for FNDC should the community decide to challenge these restrictions/bans,
- further decrease in (already fragile) trust between FNDC management and around half the community, who own dogs,
- decrease in trust between dog owners and DOC, which in turn makes us wary of their advice about dogs and wildlife,
- lessened participation in local democracies, as residents give up trying to engage with a council they believe is just not listening,
- creation of a false and destructive division between environmentalists and bird lovers, versus dog and cat lovers, in our local communities which did not previously exist (we are all animal lovers, in the end), and
- increasing anger from dog and cat lovers about kiwi release programmes, which are seen as impinging on our right to live in more and more townships.

There are additional issues which have had a critical impact on trust between council management and the dog-loving community. These are detailed in the BOI Watchdog submission and need to be addressed urgently as they underlie the mistrust that has built over many years between FNDC and dog owners, which in turn damages FNDC's capacity to engage with the community to encourage compliance with the District Plan, both Operative and Proposed. Those issues include:

- anger at the amount of time spent in consultation processes, that do not lead to substantive change,
- frustration at the adversarial, rather than collaborative, nature of FNDC management,
- anger at disrespect towards cultural considerations,
- a belief, founded or otherwise, that FNDC management might 'hide' or obfuscate policies and documents which could have a serious impact on our dogs and lives,
- a belief that – colloquially speaking - FNDC management wants Northland to become a kiwi haven, where there are no dogs or cats permitted – a huge, flightless bird aviary,
- and increase in a sense of unfairness that FNDC appears to have worse planning rules for residents, and easier rules for FNDC's own projects and properties, and
- increasing disrespect for and lack of trust in the FNDC legal department's advice in relation to bylaws, dogs, and dog restrictions and banning of cats as well.