

The 29th of April the Maitai Lodge was seen coming threw the gap by the Hope Hall and out to my left what once was a 30ft high Beech Tree lays dismembered on the ground. A double swing set and octopus merry go round both lay on their sides having been ripped out of their foundations and dragged out to one side.

In less than an hour from seeing the Maitai Lodge appear it was in its new location resting on the deck of a truck that was twisted at an angle, half in the barked area that one hour before housed the playgrounds swing set and merry-go-round.

Gobsmacked from the whole event, I was in the car and down to the Council, where I had my first encounter with the Community Services Manager.

This Gentleman acted in a way that indicated he wasn't aware of all the circumstances surrounding the relocation of the Maitai Lodge but did say that the Hope Recreation Reserve Management Committee had made the decision for the location, and the Council had made it happen.

I enquired why it could not have gone down the fence line towards the Dog Club, to which he said there would be no access. I said the Dog Club doesn't have any access they just drive across the field, to that he replied there may be rugby fields there one day. As things have transpired we now know that the Community Services Manager had been involved right from the start, when the Tennis Club tried to get more courts. So he was aware of all the submissions surrounding the courts and the fact they wanted to save the green area. I asked him why we had not been told he said they did not have to tell us and when I said about the impact it had, he disagreed. He was even kind enough to get a phone book for the Hope Recreation Reserve Management Committee secretary's phone number, so I could call him about it.

I phoned the Hope Recreation Reserve Management Committee secretary and he didn't want to know, and didn't care, saying deal with the Council. That's when I contacted Close Up. When the Community Services Manager was contacted by them I got a phone call from him to tell me the reason I was not informed of the Maitai Lodge move was because there was no impact on me but the neighbours were informed. I said that was not true, that nobody was told, he said he would go back through his information and get back to me, I never heard from him again.

The Council told members of the Hope Recreation Reserve Management Committee not to talk to anyone, so when I phoned the Recreation Reserve Management Committee secretary on the 27th May to get copies of the minutes regarding the relocation of the Maitai Lodge, he said I was not allowed them. We had a meeting with the Mayor on the 31st of May and 3 days before we managed to get copies of four Committee meetings regarding the Maitai Lodge that appeared to be rewritten in a new minute's book, with mistakes crossed out from recopying.

On the 13th of May I personally delivered a letter to the Council addressed to both the Mayor and the deputy Mayor requesting all work to cease on the Reserve until issues surrounding the relocation of the Maitai Lodge were resolved. Work continued, and on the 25th of May I received a letter from the Deputy Mayor saying he had received the letter and stating that the meeting with the Mayor on the 31st of May would be the best forum to discuss this issue. At that meeting I asked the Mayor about our letter

requesting that all work to stop on the Maitai Lodge and he said that was the wrong procedure and moved off the subject. Work continued on the Maitai Lodge, and on the 18th of June an e-mail was sent to the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Community Services Manager to cease work on the Maitai Lodge but received no reply. A reminder e-mail was sent stating that work was continuing on the Maitai Lodge. Then on the 23rd of June the Mayor replied confirming he had received the original e-mail but only made reference to other questions that were in the letter and avoided the request to stop work on the Maitai Lodge. By the time of the public meeting held on the 8th of July it was virtually finished.

On the 14th of May I personally delivered a letter to the Council for the Chief Executive which I received a stamp dated slip confirming receipt of said letter. This was explaining everything that had happen and requesting more detailed information surrounding Lodge / Recreation Reserve etc and said urgent. I never received a reply so I emailed the Chief Executive on the 17th of June to ask why. He emailed back saying he had never received the letter so I emailed it to him. I received a reply by letter dated the 25th of June, with some information that was signed by the Chief Executive but had been written by the Community Services Manager???????

The secretary of the Hope Recreation Reserve Management Committee has been there for 30 years, and has vast knowledge of the history of the area. He knew all about the Maitai Lodge and it being saved from demolition by Jennet Ellis and the community and being used for the Scouts. Including the native trees and the fact they were planted by the Scouts in the year of the child and to give something back to the community was also known. The first tennis courts were set up by the secretary whom is the only life member of the Hope Tennis Club and according to the minutes of the Hope Reserve Hearing dated 25th August 2009 the secretary was personally involved helping with the layout of the courts.

In the minutes of the Hope Recreation Reserve Committee dated 27th August 2009 it states (A meeting to be arranged between Lodge, Tennis Club, Board and TDC to choose site for Lodge). On the 2nd of September 2009 there was a walk around the Reserve, involving the Druids, Reserve Committee and Tennis Club the only representative there for the TDC was the Parks and Reserves Manager and her roll was to show those attending the location of the sewage pipe at the northern end of the Hope Hall, this apparently could not be built over. Then she left as the committee secretary lead the entourage over to the children's playground that had mysteriously already been chosen at some stage between the 27th of August and the 2nd of September 2009 as the new location for the Maitai Lodge.

IN SUMMARY

The Druid Society is allowed on a recreation reserve that allegedly plays bowls 80% of the time when they use the Lodge? According to the Community Services Manager they are friendly.

Work continued on the Maitai Lodge when we had asked at all levels of the Council to have it stopped.

There were no tenders put out for the relocation of the Maitai Lodge or the building of the tennis courts.

The new location for the Maitai Lodge was chosen by a walk around, is that how you manage a reserve? Why do you think the main Hope Hall is not up against the boundary? Why would you rip up an area that had already been developed as a children's playground, when there were plenty of other choices? Maybe the committee should have treated finding a location for the Maitai Lodge in the same manner as the layout for the new tennis courts. Instead of treating one as a technicality, and the other just as a formality.

There is a conflict of interest with the Hope Recreation Reserve Management Committee secretary having such a personal interest in the tennis club. Showing more interest in its development than managing the rest of the reserve and the effects their decisions have on the local community.

The native trees and the significance that was supposedly not known about.

We were told by Council from the start you cannot build over a sewage pipe, we disagreed but to know avail, leaving no room for the Maitai Lodge between the Hope Hall and tennis courts. Now it appears another mistake, you can build over a sewage pipe. Well, lets move the Maitai Lodge there after all, it was one of the sites looked at with room being the only problem. Not unless that area has been ear marked for a new tennis pavilion without our knowledge.

The Children's playground equipment has now been squashed into 2/3 rds the area that it once occupied and there appears to be a safety issue with the swings being in close proximity to other equipment, and the roundabout has gone. This is an outdoor Recreation on a Recreation Reserve.

Under general policies for the Richmond Ward Reserves it states under 6.24.5 consult with neighbouring residents where significant developments are proposed on an adjoining reserve land. And we weren't even told.

Not one representative from the Council has been to see us or shown any support it has been an uphill battle from the very start to get information on anything. The Council thinks by taking the blame for everything and saying sorry it is going to be the cure. Well now this is Councils chance to show how sorry they are and fix this gross piece of mismanagement and move the Maitai Lodge.

All the homes that back onto the reserve use there backyards as their private areas and outdoor living.

It is the upcoming local body elections I wonder if the voters will show the same courtesy to our ward Councillors as they have shown to us.

And the last word is from the Mayor. "They should have been told but they know now".....

Murray Kerr



Hope Residents Action Group