

## **In the Matter of Waihi North Project**

### **To – The Expert Panel on the Oceana Gold Mining Fasttrack Application**

My name is **Catherine Delahunty**.

I am a former Member of Parliament of 9 years (2008 -2017) and and the present Chair of Coromandel Watchdog of Hauraki.

I have experience as a Social Sciences Tutor – Te Tairāwhiti Polytechnic/ Bay of Plenty Polytech.

I am a resident of the region and have had 37 years experience working in local communities including Waihi and Whangamata.

My roles have included working with Waihi constituents on impacts of mining on their homes and mental health over that period.

I am not an expert witness but I have considerable lived experience in contaminated sites through my work with Hon Nick Smith to establish the Contaminated Sites Remediation Fund and in community leadership in the Hauraki.

In preparing these comments I have read the Social Impact Assessment (B.57) prepared by WSP.

I have read the Conditions and Revised Conditions attached to the Application.

#### **1.Gaps in the Social Impact Assessment (SIA)**

Since 1988 the community of Waihi have raised issues with the mine owners and operators and with myself in my MP role which are not given any substantive consideration or treatment in the SIA. Expansion of mining in and under the town and the forest will impact on more people in the community

This Social Impact Assessment doesn't acknowledge any present or future social impact on the community at Whangamatā (below the proposed Wharekirauponga Mine in the forest adjacent to that town.)

The Social Impact Assessment makes no mention of numerous social issues associated with this application and provides no independent assessment of the complex social impacts in a mining town where the mining is literally beneath homes.

## **2. Stress and Forms of Compensation**

It's not common to dig an open cast mine pit in the centre of a town especially when it destroys a small maunga . In the first decade of the Martha open pit there was considerable dust and noise affecting streets adjacent to the mine pit. Some people, especially if they had a job at the mine were willing to accept the open cast mine noise and dust. They were relying on the mining company promise that upon closure the mine pit would become a scenic lake. Given the acidic nature of the exposed surfaces of the pit this was never going to be a healthy option and did not eventuate, and the pit north face now is seriously eroded. The proposed Gladstone pit will create another large hole close to this town which will supposedly be filled up with toxic tailings. The impact of the new pit creation and long term future impacts on people living in the vicinity include effects of noise, dust, blasting and vibration, damage to homes and property, mental health issues as a result of blasts etc. Watchdog doesn't have the resources to focus in these but we wish to signal the absence of detail on them could be a concern for the Panel.

The underground mining expansion beneath homes is of greater concerns to some families. Since underground mining started people have complained regularly about the effects of blasting causing vibration under their homes and minor damage to homes and driveways. The burden of proof remains on them to prove a causal link between blasting and damage which is virtually impossible when the company deny this is true and claim that blasts are within consent conditions. This may be true but doesn't alter the impact on the public with varying sensitivities. The Conditions related top Complaints are concerning as there is no independent agency for residents to complain to and report to Councils on complaints doesn't resolve any of the issues. . People working from home or retired, chronic illness sufferers or on nightshift have expressed the most difficulty with the daily blasts. I am of the view

that blasting and vibration conditions should be designed for the most vulnerable not the “average person” .

### **3. The AEP – Amenity Effects Programme**

This programme was created after sustained protest and lobbying by Waihi people. Locals who negotiate this can be offered a “respite” weekend in motels so they can live with the impacts of the conditions under their homes. If the homes are too near the pit or the blasting zones the mining company buys out the people and this owns houses throughout the town. It is not possible to find out how many houses Oceana Gold own in the town at the moment but this enables them to operate in some areas without complaint. A number of people active in the complaints against the mine sold their houses and left town, but needing to sell to the mining company can also silence people who are having issues with mining impacts. This is social impact and if expansion is consented there will be increasing social effects in the town as well as more accommodation needed.

Real estate agents in Waihi have expressed the view that the mining company controls the housing market by default although this view is not universal and would require more research to establish. However, locals residents have complained to me that mining purchases and offering top ups to increase the purchase price distorts the housing market.

It’s important to note the AEP was not created by the mining industry but campaigned for by the community with the help of MP Jeanette Fitzsimons.

There has also been compensation for subsidence risk of \$3million to at least 27 households in Waihi.

It’s worth noting that no other towns in Aotearoa have to rely on a company-run compensation scheme to mitigate the social impacts of mining under their homes.

None of this is mentioned in the Waihi North Project application Chapter on Social Impact – as Oceana Gold plans a large expansion in Waihi they should at least explain to the Panel how they expect the AEP to mitigate social impact on the wider numbers of people who will be affected . No “avoid” strategy has been considered.

### **3. Conditions Related to Waihi Community**

There HDC Revised Conditions ( C93) require reporting to them on a proposed training scheme for the mining workforce in Waihi. The scheme is the least one would expect for the largest employer in a community and it's surprising that the associated data doesn't exist and such an investment is not already happening.

We would support the HDC Revised Conditions 105-110 which require the company to fund a Social Impact Management Plan including a social impact assessment specialist.

In the Part D Condition 35 we also agree with HDC suggestion that when vibration damage occurs and there is disagreement as to whether mining impact caused that damage a third party must arbitrate. However we would urge the Panel to seek some information about whether this is already a practice, if it works and how many times its has been used to the satisfaction of the homeowners or tenants involved.

### **4. Wharekirauponga project**

The impact on Whangamata people has not been discussed in the Social Impact Assessment Chapter. The uncertainty experienced by the community around their access to their forests, the potential for dewatering and blasting effects on important species in that forest and possible reputational effects on their economy if mining goes ahead, has not been considered.

I attach quotes from some people in Whangamata.

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Earthwatch Whangamatā asked Coromandel Watchdog to include this from residents below:

“We are a local group that fights to protect the environment we are intrinsically a part of - our forests, rivers, wildlife and water supply. The location of the proposed Wharekirauponga Gold Mine is particularly significant to Whangamata, being only a

short 10kilometers away and the headwaters the southern harbour of Whangamatā - the Otahu Estuary

We work with Coromandel Watchdog and requested that our sample of residents concerns be passed on to the FastTrack Panel.

The Waihi North mining application is impacting on our community now. As a tourist town with a huge influx of both NZ and international visitors, we very much depend on our beautiful surroundings and cannot abide anything that would put that at risk. Not only that, we depend on clear clean water, coming from our nearby valleys, for our water supply. We are concerned at the focus on jobs in this application, to the detriment of the place we live. There are other ways of creating the few jobs that this increasingly automated mining operation can provide.

These comments are not a statistical sample but were volunteered by people who wish the Panel to hear some community perspectives

**Kate (Environmental Engineer and Whangamatā Mum):** *I take my daughter for nature experiences into the Parakiwai forest which is our beautiful backyard forest. We always hunt for Archey's Frog and feed the eels. The river has one of the best swimming holes on the Coromandel and we head up every week in summer. The last thing we want is blasting and vibration under that forest or risks to the water table and river flow. Mining is short term gain and will provide nothing for our community and will negatively impact our beautiful backyard forest.*

**Luke and Bronwyn (local business owner):**

Kia ora,

We are long term residents of Whangamatā, and own a lifestyle block of land we have called home for 20 years. It is 5 minutes drive from the township, bordering forestry areas, and the Waikiki stream. We own a sustainable construction company building homes in Whangamatā since 2006. We are trail runners, bird watchers, and lovers of nature. Our property is a native sanctuary. Every day we run a minimum of 10km in the areas behind where we live. In the weekend, we tramp, or ride bikes, we explore, and we drink from the streams. We have spent many years recreating DOC walking tracks, and smaller tracks made by the generation before us. The latest exploration maps detail the areas we have explored for the last 20 years, as close as 5km from our home - native areas north of September Road and all the way up behind and surrounding Wentworth Valley, as well as across to the Luck at Last

track. I am seriously concerned, if mining goes ahead in these areas that many of us grew up exploring and continue to, they will no longer be accessible. We know these areas like the back of our hands. We encounter kereru, ruru, kaka, tui and bellbird regularly. The native trees are some of the most impressive NZ has. We walk through kauri groves, nikau, kahikatea, tōtara and rimu. Unless you frequent these areas, you would not know they are here.

This will impact our family, those who adventure with us, and our tamariki.

Please, we ask that you do not touch the areas behind Whangamatā including the Wentworth Valley. These are magical places, places that are unique to many people. This would negatively impact our mental health and wellbeing in an unfathomable way.

Regards

Luke and Bronwyn.

**Sara (local resident and mother):** I am a mother of two young children living in the outskirts of Whangamatā. I have resided here for 10 years. Every summer, Parakiwai is a very popular spot for both tourists and locals alike. We frequent the area for bush walks, and swims in the cool deep water holes. Having grown up in the Philippines where environmental degradation caused by mining (poisoned water supply, destruction of native forest flora and fauna, flooding, to name a few) has affected local communities for decades, I am deeply concerned by the proposed mining activities in the area. Mining companies and those invested in mining will always try to make it seem profitable and beneficial to local communities, but history shows benefits from mining are very limited, short-lived, while the damage and environmental degradation are long term and in most cases irreversible. Is that the future we want for local residents, businesses, and visitors?

Let's think long term, let's think about our kids, grandkids, and other future generations.

**Andy (Teacher and Farmer; long term resident of Whangamatā):** When our family first moved to Whangamatā 32 years ago, we loved the beauty and the opportunity the local river and bush environments gave us to share. Our children played and swam in the clear and clean river water in the DoC estate at Parakiwai and Wentworth valleys. We regularly walk the trails and dip in the pools along the way, enjoying the calm and peaceful tranquillity of the natural settings. As the family has grown and expanded, we still cherish the times we spend at these sites with our children, grandchildren, friends and visitors.

If there was any possible or potential risk to the water quality in either of these catchments, either intentional or accidental, this would severely and negatively

impact the environment (including in and around the waters edge) and reduce our enjoyment of the area, with a high probability of posing a prolonged health risk to the natural environment, its inhabitants and visitors alike. Why should we be at risk of having this taken from us for the profits of a few overseas miners?

This area is well documented as a region of high rainfall and regular flooding bears this out. These rain events increase the risk of unforeseen, poorly planned or poorly managed sites related to mining of releasing toxic material into the environment. More and more regions of NZ are feeling the effects of heavier rainfall and atmospheric rivers. I feel for the people of Nelson, Tai Rawhiti and Auckland recently hit by these events, but shudder to think of one hitting this area if there were any mining activity upstream. These rain events are a matter of when not if, and are becoming increasingly difficult to manage any associated risks.

Risks can be short term, as in the life cycle of mining operations, or long term as we saw discharge from long abandoned mine workings pouring into the nearby Karangahape River last year. Incidents such as the recent pollution leak are not covered nor covered by the short-term nature of mining licences, despite the well known very long term toxic legacy. There is no mitigation for these negative externalities as they impact heavily on the natural environment and the loss of enjoyment for the locals and tourists that utilize the area. Mining is a short-term boom and bust industry and the locals are left to live among the mess long after the profits head overseas to the parent mining companies. Why should we locals be subjected to these risks, as those who benefit are few and often from overseas?

These beautiful areas do not deserve the potential disasters that mining can bring. Nearby Tui mine on Mt Te Aroha should be a warning to any governmental authority of the possibilities of long term damage. Our local area does not need the sound of mining operations drowning out the kokako or tui. We prefer our native frogs lining peacefully high on the hills without being shaken by underground mine blasting. Why should our environment and our enjoyment suffer?

We have spent the last 30 years working with the local Rivercare group and Waikato regional Council riparian planting, fencing and maintaining the Wentworth River as it flows through our farm to protect it from unwanted farm runoff and to keep the river water quality as high as possible. Water testing many years ago showed the health of the river increased as it moved through the farmed areas with a drop in E. coli levels. Bird life has flourished and native fish and eels are plentiful. Locals in the Parakiwai Valley have done the same. Stock no longer stand in the river, polluting as they drink. It would be very sad and extremely disappointing if mining activity were to undermine all of this hard work.

**Clive (tramper):** *I've spent over 30 years up the Parakiwai Valey, tramping and doing*

*voluntary track maintenance. Have taken over 30 people to see the valley, including*

*Japanese tourists. So, it is my favourite place on the whole Coromandel. It's the only place*

*where I have felt entirely relaxed. In fact, I would like my ashes spread up there when I die. I*

*hate the fact that the mining company don't consider the impact that tunnelling through all*

*the underground streams and springs may have in the long term, long after they've left.*

**Tomas (local business owner, surfer, mountain biker):** Whangamatā is a fantastic place to

raise a family and the Parakiwai Valley is the most beautiful walk. Why would we want the

noise of helicopters and vibrations from underground mining in a place like this? The

Coromandel is a known tourist destination and I am worried for my business if mining

becomes a big feature. It makes no sense, why are we letting a big overseas company

come in and make a lot of money from us with no benefit to us. In any case, we don't need

their money.

**Suzanne (local business owner, tramper):** *I am worried that local businesses will ultimately*

*suffer when the Coromandel Peninsula becomes known as the mining capital of New*

*Zealand. Who wants that?!! Right now we are a very well-known tourist destination, known*

*for nature and beauty and tranquillity and recreation and what the politicians don't seem able*

*to grasp is that the environment IS our economy.*

**Kirstan (local resident):** Kia Ora. My name is Kristan.

I lived in Whangamatā for 13 years bringing my brood of children up there. One of our special places was Parakiwai where it's untouched beauty of flora and fauna never ceased to amaze us. We would spend the whole day jumping off the cliff and



having a picnic. We also like to hike to the waterfall at Wentworth and marvel at the pressure of the underground aquifer pushing up to create this wonderful spectacle.

I now live in Opoutere where the birdlife is incredible.

One of the main water supplies for Whangamatā comes from Rafael's farm which will be compromised if underground drilling is conducted.

It is an unnecessary option for this part of the country which is steeped in beauty and abundance, the main focus should be on maintaining and promoting tourism.

I've never met anyone who works at any mine in my time at Whangamatā nor here in Opoutere.

I am appalled at the government's decision to fast track any type of mining activity and/ or promote it selfishly.

I expect this one term government to continue its destructive course but am also aware that the next government WILL repeal and overturn most of what is happening especially in mining in the Coromandel.

**Olivia (counselling student and social worker):** *Kia ora, my name's Olivia. My family have been holidaying in Whangamatā for three generations. It is a home for all of us, we have a beach home there and use it amply. I have lived in Whangamatā on and off a couple of times, my last stint being for two years. I've been deeply hurt by the idea that Wharekirauponga could be mined. I have many childhood and adult memories exploring the ngāhere and awa. I love diving into the clean, fresh water and enjoying the peacefulness of the trees and birds. They have been a source of wellbeing for myself in times of hardship and to think about its wellbeing being compromised is heartbreaking. I'm concerned about the future health of the forest and waters. I also surf and dive and am aware that the rivers feed into the ocean, this worries me for the health of the moana. It pains me to think I won't be able to share the joy, rejuvenation and belonging myself, siblings, parents, grandparents and great-grandparents have relished in with my children and grandkids, and generations on. I believe it will change the feel of serenity and purity of Whangamatā that many people enjoy. I say no mining. Ngā mihi.*

**Marion (Teacher):** I'm an English teacher and love the Coromandel bush and outdoors. I regularly walk to the waterfall in the Wentworth Valley and have been walking the Parakiwai track until it closed. I am devastated that this area will be mined and essentially will be contaminated and forever changed and altered by mining. This area has endangered species including Archie's frog so industrial scale mining will devastate this area. The species will be lost forever. The waterways also risk contamination from the tailing run off. I often swim in the Wentworth Valley River.

The water quality will be degraded forever. I have experienced the arsenic contamination in the creeks and rivers on the south islands west coast.

The devastation cannot be mitigated. This area is a national treasure and affects everyone's well being through the ability to recreate in our beautiful bush.

**Trudy (Whangamatā Grandmother):** *My concern is for the natural environment. For the unknown damage from the effects of blasting, of vibration, of water pollution on the Parakiwai River and area.*

*Parakiwai is a taonga, a pristine environment, one that my family has explored for three generations. 45 years ago we were drawn to the magnificence of the hexagonal columns on the bluff walls at the start of the Parakiwai track, the only gazetted geological region in the Coromandel. We looked for koura, eels, dragon and stone flies in the river and walked to the waterfall and pool where we sometimes found the courage to jump in. We are still picnicking, paddling and swimming in the Parakiwai and still looking for the creatures that show the valley and river is in good health.*

*There is no way that the destructive effects of mining for gold fit into this. It is so important to ensure that the deep dive into nature that being in the Parakiwai brings is protected for future generations.*

**Helen (Community Volunteer):** I am a community volunteer who has lived in Whangamatā for 31 years. We bought up our sons here and have worked and socialized closely with locals and their families in many ways.

Everyone we know are always attracted to the Coromandel because it's a clean and natural paradise to live in and to visit for holidays and weekend activities.

The outdoors features as the absolutely best reason to be here. We walk and ride and swim and explore and treasure our natural environment so much because it's the soul of our people

The modern day mining proposal for the Whangamatā land is a dark shadow over our community wellbeing and a potential stain on our cherished home.

I am also really worried about a negative effect on our water catchment and the fact that our supply could be severely damaged by the physical and constant draining of our underground aquifer that supports our population.

Being underground in the hills gives me no comfort that we are protected from this invasive and unnecessary assault on our land by indifferent international mining companies.

Please stop before it is too late!

**Renée (Primary School Teacher & Scuba Instructor):** *I brought my twin girls up in Whangamatā after moving here in 2003. Every summer we take an annual trek up to the big waterfall at Parakiwai at least three times. The numbers of cousins and friends would increase as we talked about it with friends and we all enjoy it so very much. My class and I would visit also and the amount of nature experience and learning the children get is phenomenal, not to mention a love of the outdoors and a passion to protect these spaces right in our backyard. We love the Archey's Frog - the kids are always on the lookout for one and are pumped that a species of frog lives just behind their hometown! The eels are abundant and the bird life is stunning.*

*The beauty of the forest and the stillness will be severely hampered by invasive drilling and blasting.*

*The swimming holes along the river are so awesome, and anything that affects the river and the water table would cause instability. This area is such a treasure. It needs to be loved and protected.*

*Having moved into instructing Scuba, I see the run offs in the ocean and it concerns me that our beautiful creeks, river, Estuary and ocean will also suffer the effects of any extra water flow. I am against mining - it is for short term gain. It adds nothing to the environment.*

**Teeearn (Events & Sponsorship Manager and Mum):** The Parakiwai Valley and swimming hole are a precious tāonga for our whānau and Whangamatā community. As a family we enjoy the beautiful bush, observing native trees and birds, and swimming in the water hole multiple times a week over the warmer months. Having this on our doorstep provides an opportunity to connect with nature and has a positive impact on our health and mental wellbeing. I am concerned that mining in this area and any blasting or vibration will damage the natural environment including water quality, native species, flora and fauna and have a negative impact on this beautiful treasure for our community not only for this generation but for future generations to come. It's also a popular swim hole for visitors to Whangamatā and will have a negative impact on local tourism and perception of the Coromandel.

**Graeme (Father, pilot):** *I have a long history with the land in the Coromandel, especially Whangamatā. My grandfather returned from WW2 and built what is now my batch on Kiwi Rd in the 1950s. It took him a few years because he had to drive over from Te Awamutu on dirt and gravel roads on his weekends to complete the work.*

*I have been going to the batch since I was born. My parents, auntie's, uncle's, cousins and now my kids have all grown up with Whangamatā as a holiday base.*

*It is part of me. It is part of my family. We all regularly spend time in the bush around Parakiwai and Wentworth Valley. Bush walks, camping and swimming in the rivers and at the smaller beaches near Whangamatā.*

*The culturally and emotional connection I have with that part of the country is worth more than any dollar value. As I get older it is even more important to me, because it is something that I can pass onto my kids. They can say that their Great Grandparents built this batch, walked this land, swum in these rivers and fished in these seas. No amount of gold can justify the damage that another mine will do to this environment.*

*The proposed mining will be a short sighted gain that will negatively impact the long term gain of the environmental and tourism based economy.*

*The rich ecology and environmental value of the region is too great to risk. The risk-v-reward factor just doesn't add up.*

*I hope the proposed mining does not go ahead.*

**Debbie (mum - skin therapist ):** *My family and I have been enjoying Parakiwai and Wentworth for the past 20 years. In particular great hikes and beautiful clear waterholes. Mining here is a risky move that will really harm the beautiful landscape and wildlife in the area. The process can mess with local ecosystems and even lead to polluted water - not great for the community or the marine life. Plus, while some might chase short-term profits, the long-term impacts often create more problems than they solve. It's important to protect these spots, so we can keep enjoying nature and support sustainable tourism that benefits everyone in the long run.*

**Sue and Tom (long term Whanga property owners):** *We have always opposed mining in the Coromandel. In fact I still have the T-shirt from years ago when mining in Waihi was expanded. The Parakiwai Valley is a beautiful spot, beloved by trampers, tourists and locals. When our kids were young it was a favourite afternoon walk of ours and Tom continued to tramp there until very recently. Already we know that access to this beautiful native bush area has been impacted by plans for the mine.*

We oppose mining on conservation land in principle because it is crown land and should not be used for a private venture. The profits of the mine mostly go overseas so there is very little economic benefit for the country. On the other hand, mining has very serious effects on the environment such as the endangered Archie's frog. The river water will be polluted and the tailings will be added to the tailings mountain in Waihi.

It is an absolute disgrace that an overseas mining company has been allowed to go ahead with the mine in spite of fierce opposition by the local people.

**Renee (Community Worker and Herbalist):** *Wharekirauponga is a special place for me, as it is for many who live and visit this part of the Coromandel Coast. I am absolutely devastated that it is facing such a mammoth mining threat! This catchment is a haven of nature for locals, visitors, and for the various creatures that call it home (most notably, the critically endangered Archie's Frog). Degradation of the forest ecosystem through the inevitable pollution (environmental, noise, water), erosion and loss of water, will greatly impact our ability to enjoy the ngahere and swimming hole!*

*I am also a local herbalist, and depend on a thriving forest ecosystem to harvest medicinal native plants. The medicinal quality of these plants is defined by the health of the ecosystem, and I have huge concerns over my ability to produce quality herbal medicine for clients if the health of this vital native ecosystem is compromised!*

**Jan (School Librarian):** I chose to live in Whangamatā 50 years ago so my children could grow up learning to appreciate nature, to live in a pristine environment and become part of a community of like minded people.

Their playground extended from the bush to the ocean, the rivers are where they learnt to swim.

They wish to be able to share this beautiful area of Aotearoa with their own children going forward.

The harmful effects of mining will negatively impact on our communities environment, particularly with respect to water quality, that flows from the hills of Wharekirauponga into the Parakiwai river and then into the Otahu estuary out to the Pacific Ocean.

We as a community, through Oceana Gold's exploration process, have already been denied access to the Parakiwai walking track and this would be the case going forward. Will the area be so degraded that it is lost to the people of Aotearoa forever?

**Jan (local resident):** Aloha my name is Jan and I have been a local in Whangamatā since the late 1960's. I have four children, eleven grandchildren and one great grandchild. I live in Wentworth Valley.

*I can't believe I am sitting here trying to find words to express how I feel. My feelings are of great concern and very unsettled at the thought of mining underneath where I, my family and neighbours live. It is a privilege to be here as guardians and caretakers of the land.*

*The Coromandel ranges are sacred. No good will come of mining. It disturbs the mana, the foundations of life that resides upon her soils and resources that flow through the valleys to the waterways, harbours, estuaries, beaches and oceans. It is the place where people, the families, the tourists, the holiday makers come to experience its natural beauty and rivers and more.*

*Please consider the consequences of mining. Allow the peninsula to be untouched from mining etc and let it be the beautiful pristine place it is known for.*

*Open up tourism on the peninsula, and encourage the local people to host events into their towns that will nourish the energy of its people and communities instead of sending in the army of machines hidden in the back roads to hide the undermining and threatening the foundations we live on.*

*Please govern and serve with intelligence to keep these beautiful lands whole and healthy for our generations to come. Please save Aotearoa from being used to fill the pockets of those who don't live here on this land.*

*I wish for you and others to experience what I have in my neighbourhood.. the mountains, bush, streams and rivers. They are part of the lives of the people of the peninsula and the holiday makers, the tourists.*

*Set the example for all and protect our lands, nourish our people with hope and encouragement.*

*The leaders of the world are losing their grace. They are not protecting their lands and the people are losing hope.*

*Become the guardians and caretakers of the land not the ones who will be known in history who 'sold it out' or worse took what not is there's to take. There will be consequences.*

*I wish you all well and pray for God's grace upon you in your service to us your people of Aotearoa and for the souls who are working to save our Coromandel Peninsula from mining.*

*Mahalo Nui loa.*

**Mark (retired GP):** Kia Ora. My name is Mark; I'm a 75yr old retired GP.

I have used the Parakiwai Valley for recreational purposes for 25 years, and I'm horrified at having it disturbed by mining. I do not believe that tunnelling from Waihi will not disturb the water table, with potentially severe downstream effects. It is even more galling that this ecological vandalism is being undertaken solely for the profit of a transnational corporations. That the local economy will benefit is shown to be a lie by the fact that after decades of gold mining Waihi still occupies the lowest decile in the NZ economic deprivation index - gold mining is good for no one but the company doing it.

Please keep these greedy vandals out of our beautiful Parakiwai.

**Jane (local resident):** *I am an eighty-seven year old woman. For the last 15 years I have been a permanent resident of Whiritoa Beach. Whiritoa has no reticulated water, residents rely on wells, or tank water. Our well water is very good, however we are the closest community geographically to the proposed mining activity which I understand proposes "extensive dewatering" of the underground. What does this mean for us.*

*In addition to my NIMBY concerns, Whiritoa is one of the most beautiful places on the Coromandel if not in the world, many visitors stop to wonder on their way to enjoy the unspoiled forest and mountains beyond. And many retire here.*

*If the only road in and out becomes hopelessly congested with traffic caused by the "economic benefits" of gold mining, who can blame them for looking elsewhere?*

**Nicole (local resident):** Our area's natural environment, with its spectacular beaches and surrounding native bush is the key reason why so many of us have chosen to relocate to the area and it's what attracts visitors. And without domestic tourism, what will happen to our local economy? There are endless world wide examples of the negative consequences of gold mining and we must take heed of incidents across the ditch - e.g. heavy metals, including arsenic, identified in the drinking water near a major gold mine in New South Wales. These are real-life stories! There's the dust, the contaminated soil and water and there's noise which will particularly affect those closer to the sites, and of course there's the visual impact to our area's natural beauty.

Above all, considering the supposed benefits to the country's economy, there is very few certainty (or transparency?!) about what we will inherit long term, the cost of remediating whatever damage may occur and to what extent that will outweigh the gains, and how long it will take to restore the land.

Ultimately, it will be us and the generations to come that will be living with the negative consequences of gold mining, long after the mining company has made its profits and moved on.

**Natalie (Teacher and Mother)** As a teacher and mother living in Whangamatā I am deeply concerned the potential impact that mining and prospecting in the Parakiwai and Wharekirauponga areas would have on the education and learning experiences of children and Rangitahi in our community. These natural spaces are not just part of our environment they are essential outdoor classrooms used by outdoor learners of all ages.

From our youngest Tamariki at the local Kindergarten and ECE centre's who regularly visit the Wentworth to learn about eel life cycles in a real life context and participate in predator trapping, to our Ōpoutere School students (years 1-8) who utilise these areas in their Adventure learning curriculum (expeditions, adventure races and paddle boarding up the rivers) these spaces are foundational to their understanding of the natural world and their development as kaitiaki (guardians) of the land.

Students from Whangamatā area school who attend Toku ara (a year 10 outdoors programme) also Students from Whangamatā area school who attend Toku ara (a year 10 outdoors programme) also Rely on these areas for hands on learning including bush walking, orienteering, mapping and camping. These activities not only build physical skills and resilience but also grounds the Rangitahi and provides an unmatched sense of wellbeing that is essential to their mental health.

Locking our children out of these areas in order to allow an overseas company to take our resources for a measly return is in view unacceptable. Our children deserve to have unobstructed access to these public lands without fear of being harmed or worse fined! It is their democratic right to live and learn in these spaces, after all. What message are we sending them if we the adults let this be taken from them.

**Mary,** (General Nurse, Midwife, and Community Support Worker, Pensioner and Grandmother of 5 whose future should be spoken for).

I sincerely want my voice to be heard as being violently against the proposed mining of our Conservation Land. But I don't really know what to say or how to pinpoint the words amidst the huge anxiety I am feeling about extracting the Stones and Minerals, the excavating of the ground, and the disruption of the natural flow of waters.

The Mountains, Hills and Valleys that surround the coastal towns of Whangatmata, Whiritoa and Tairua have not just a physical but a deep spiritual draw for those of us who choose to live here and to walk in peace with a land that is pristine, virtually untouched and so unique. My mind and Body has entered into a sort of helpless paralysis over this — I Scream and Shout silently, my Blood is Boiling, Blood pressure is soaring;



The spirit of the land is saying GO-AWAY, LEAVE ME BE - my soils, rocks, minerals, plants, water and all living species; the sounds of us living in harmony symbiotically. What rights do you have to interfere with the Bones, my life and the Taonga of my existence. Nothing will ever be the same for Ever AND EVER.

When I last walked the Parakiwai Track (about 10 months ago) I got as far as the bridge over the River, near the end , but was caged out of being allowed to go further. The constant sound of helicopters ferrying mining equipment to and fro from this vast caged area was terrifying. There was no native or natural sounds to be heard, the world around us was being pillaged and raped, the spirit was shrouded, dying.

Oceana Gold's proposed invasion into the upper reaches of the Parakiwai areas above Whangamata is being paid for by an outrageously wealthy multinational company that will stop at nothing to achieve its objective. If their operations are not going to disrupt and impede the lives of the peoples living in and around their invasion, then why are they spending so much money upgrading and improving community facilities which our local government can not afford to do. Including paranoid protection from Kauri Die Back which results in closing off even more land for their covert operations. And yes, helping so nicely to contribute to the vermin control.

It's a take over, It conveys Guilt in advance of what they know is going to happen. An Adverse landslide of irreversible change. Its Bribery and Undermining in order to turn our attention away from what is going to be a rape and pillage of our natural reserve, conservation land and the precious resources it owns.