

Kia ora Charissa and Rachael,

Thanks for getting in touch and for the work UWEN and the groups across Upper Harbour are doing.

As Upper Harbour continues to grow, I think protecting and restoring the natural environment has to be part of the plan from the beginning. It can't be something we try to fix afterwards.

## **1. Significant challenges faced in the Upper Harbour electorate**

For me three of the biggest challenges are managing growth and infrastructure properly, protecting our natural environment and keeping the area affordable and connected.

### **Growth and infrastructure**

Upper Harbour is growing quickly, particularly around Hobsonville and Whenuapai. I don't think growth itself is the problem. We need more homes and we need communities to be able to grow.

The challenge is making sure housing and development don't race ahead of transport, stormwater, wastewater, schools and community infrastructure.

I'd like to see much better coordination between central government, Auckland Council and developers so communities aren't left dealing with the consequences after the fact.

### **Protecting nature and building climate resilience**

The second challenge is making sure we don't lose the things that make these communities such good places to live.

Mature trees, wetlands, streams and ecological corridors all play an important role. They cool our neighbourhoods, help with stormwater and flooding and provide habitat for native species.

I strongly support protecting mature trees where we can, restoring streams and wetlands and increasing tree canopy in areas like Whenuapai where coverage is very low. I'd also like to see blue-green networks designed into new communities from the beginning.

### **Affordability and transport**

Housing, transport and power costs are all connected. If people have to drive everywhere because public transport isn't good enough or spend hours commuting because affordable housing is nowhere near jobs and services, that is a real cost to households.

I want to see much better public transport, more housing in the right places and more affordable renewable electricity.

## **2. AI data centres**

The Greens have taken a clear position on this.

We are calling for a one-year pause on consenting new AI data centres while proper national rules are developed around their impact on our electricity supply, water, environment and communities.

I support that approach.

I'm not opposed to data centres and there may well be benefits for New Zealand from having this infrastructure here. But when we are talking about developments that can use very large amounts of electricity and water I think it is reasonable to make sure we properly understand the impacts first.

We need transparency around energy and water use. We need to understand the environmental impacts and communities need to have a meaningful say.

I also don't think households and existing businesses should be left carrying the cost of major new demand on our electricity or water infrastructure.

For me the sensible approach is to get the rules right first and then assess developments against those rules.

## **3. Land use and urban planning**

I'm concerned about narrowing tree protection to the point where we lose the ability to protect mature trees for their ecological and community value.

Councils need to be able to recognise the contribution mature trees make to biodiversity, shade, stormwater management and the overall health of our neighbourhoods. Their value goes well beyond whether they happen to have historic heritage status.

I support Auckland Council's goal of getting urban tree canopy towards 30% by 2050.

I also think we need to be careful that increasing canopy doesn't simply become a matter of cutting down established trees and planting small new ones somewhere else. We need to protect the mature canopy we already have while also planting more.

## **Fast Track**

On Fast Track my position is clear. I oppose the Fast-track Approvals Act, as do the Greens.

I support making it faster and easier to build the housing, renewable energy and infrastructure we need, but that should not come at the expense of proper environmental scrutiny or communities having a meaningful say.

The goal should be a planning system that is faster and more effective without sacrificing good

environmental outcomes.

### **Private plan changes and Future Urban Zones**

I don't think every private plan change is necessarily a bad thing.

My concern is where development is pushed into Future Urban Zones before the infrastructure needed to support it is ready.

If land is going to be rezoned for development then transport, wastewater, stormwater, schools, community facilities and blue-green infrastructure all need to be part of the picture.

I'd also like streams, wetlands, ecological corridors and important vegetation to help shape a development from the beginning rather than becoming something we try to fit around everything else afterwards.

### **RMA reform**

I absolutely think the resource management system can be improved. It is too complicated, too slow in places and often badly resourced.

At the same time, I don't think making it simpler should mean losing important environmental protections.

The Greens have raised serious concerns about the Government's current replacement legislation and the potential weakening of environmental safeguards and limits. Those are concerns I share.

On the specific issues you raise:

- **Regulatory Relief:** I'm concerned about creating a system that financially discourages councils from introducing legitimate environmental protections. Councils need to be able to protect important ecosystems without facing unreasonable financial consequences for doing so.
- **Removal of Council placing Environmental caps:** I support strong environmental limits. An environmental bottom line needs to actually be a bottom line.
- **Hauraki Gulf Tikapa Moana Protection Act 2025:** I support the protections that have been put in place and I support going further in restoring the health of the Gulf.
- **Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area Act 2008:** I strongly support retaining the purpose and environmental protections of the Act and would be concerned about changes that weakened them.

More broadly, I don't see good development and environmental protection as opposing ideas.

Upper Harbour is going to keep growing. I think our job is to make sure that growth is done well with infrastructure ready, nature protected and communities properly planned.

I really appreciate UWEN taking the time to ask these questions and the work your groups are already doing across the electorate.

Ngā mihi,

Ryan

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