

Greens want change to civil aviation bill amid helicopter concerns

Waiheke community advocates have long hoped the government’s overhaul of the Civil Aviation Act would help set rules around the growing number of helicopters on the island.

Over the past week the bill has been going through its second of three hearings in parliament, after passing through the select committee process in June.

Auckland Central MP Chlöe Swarbrick says the Greens could not support the bill as written since it not only didn’t include key considerations on climate change, it also fails to address widespread community concern over the noise and impact of the proliferation of private helipads - as shown by the hard work, submissions and presentations to the select committee by organisations such as; Quiet Sky Waiheke, Quiet Sky Waitemata and the local boards of Waiheke Island, Waitemata and Aotea Great Barrier

“Impacting this we kind of have two main, core, pieces of legislation that don’t really talk to each other very well,” Chlöe says.

Basically, local government district plan rules are derived from the Resource Management Act (RMA), which only allows councils to set rules around take-offs and landings. Overlying came under Civil Aviation laws, which were mainly limited to airspace over and around airports. So effectively, neither the Civil Aviation Authority or Auckland Council have the scope to fully address concerns about helicopter noise.

Chlöe says as the bill currently reads

the Minister of Transport *may* make rules to address that, but leaves too much room for the community’s concerns to fall by the wayside. She proposes amending the bill to say the Minister *must* make rules which consider the impact of aviation noise in all areas in consultation with the Minister of Conservation by 2025 - to be reviewed at least once every six years.

ACTMP Simon Court, his party’s spokesman for the environment and climate change, praises the current bill for avoiding “woke climate dogma”, “climate fairies” and “social engineering.”

He dismissed concerns over helicopter noise as proof of the Greens “loathe success and envy wealth.”

Quiet Sky Waiheke’s Kim Whitaker (pictured) says envy has nothing to do with it, many Waihekeans just want their desire to peacefully enjoy their rural island to be respected and considered in the consent process for new helipads.

“We not against the wealthy, but just because you are rich it doesn’t mean you can ignore the impacts on others and do whatever you want,” he says. “We are solely concerned about managing the impacts from a proliferation of non-essential, private-use helicopters - [especially] when



there’s plenty of perfectly good alternatives.”

With more than 50 helipads already, Waiheke has roughly the same number as Busan, South Korea, a city of 3.4 million people and has the third highest number of helipads of any major city according to international non-governmental organisation the Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat.

Even if Chlöe’s amendment doesn’t go through, Quiet Sky is hopeful Minister of Transport Kieran McNulty would act on their concerns.

But there was also another bill before parliament that could be an opportunity to address the legislative gap around helicopter noise - the Natural and Built Environment Bill, a proposed update and replacement for the RMA.

Kim says Quiet Sky Waiheke have already written to that bill’s sponsor, Minister for the Environment David Parker, asking how it might bridge the current regulatory gap between the RMA and Civil Aviation Act. “It does not appear to do that upon initial reading, however the Minister did in fact write to Auckland Council seeking their advice on this exact matter [earlier this year].” As was discussed in a council planning committee meeting this May. • Paul Mitchell



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	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN				
☁ WAI AUCK	0.0 0.0	0.5 0.0	0.0 1.0	2.2 14.0	3.5 10.0	5.0 15.0	12.0 13.0	23.2 53.0	78.0 108.0	54.8 64.3	
☀ WAI AUCK	23.9° 25.0°	24.2° 23.9°	23.4° 24.2°	22.0° 19.6°	21.5° 20.7°	21.4° 22.8°	20.9° 22.3°	22.5° 23.6°	22.1° 22.3°	17.8° 20.4°	
❄ WAI AUCK	15.0° 15.3°	15.4° 17.5°	17.4° 18.2°	17.0° 17.0°	16.0° 15.3°	15.6° 16.3°	16.5° 16.2°	16.1° 16.5°	15.3° 15.3°	11.0° 12.5°	

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