



Sometimes things that people disagree with at the time end up being a really good decision, so sometimes it's about being brave, being strategic.

# Dianne Hale

Having lived in Devonport since 1967, Dianne is a well-known figure in the community. She has been involved in community and at the forefront of local body politics for 30 years. She has enjoyed weighing up the arguments and working out what is best for the community going forward, even if not everyone always agrees with the decisions made. Dianne has been called on many times, and described as a reliable anchor, for her length and breadth of knowledge. Her reputation is one of being very balanced, fair and pragmatic.

Even though she has lived on the North Shore for the majority of her life, Dianne lived in many places before coming to the Shore. Born in Howick, she then lived in South Auckland where her parents had a farm. The family later moved to Sumner in the South Island in 1953 for four years, where Dianne started primary school. The family eventually returned to the Auckland area, settling in Whenuapai. Dianne attended Whenuapai Primary School and then Rutherford High School in Te Atatu, where she was a foundation pupil.

Dianne considers that her parents, Ralda and Bruce, were *fantastic role models*. They taught her the value of hard work and the importance of good ethical behaviour towards other people. She and her four brothers were *pretty lucky really, we had an excellent childhood*.

In 1967, when she was 19 years of age, Dianne married Dennis Hale. The couple had met during their summer holidays at the caravan park at Orewa; her family visited the park every year. After

they were married they settled in Devonport, where they still live today. *We saved and scraped, and bought a house in Calliope Road, and filled it with hand-me-downs from family. I think the only thing that was new was the fridge.* At the time Devonport was not a favoured place to buy a house; *how things have changed!* Banks were only happy, and more willing, to offer loans for the purchase of new houses in those days. Dianne was working at Bank of New Zealand at the time and because of that was able to get a mortgage for their older home. In 1971, she and Dennis started their panelbeating business in Devonport, Fleet St Panelbeaters Ltd. It is still family-owned and now run by their son, Nathan.

Dianne has seen many changes in Devonport since she first moved there in 1967. She remembers the petrol stations, the scoria pits adjacent to the bus depot in the vicinity of the Bartley Terrace car park, which housed the buses that met the Devonport ferry, and the many service industries located where the New World supermarket is today. Dianne would go to work, at the BNZ in



*As Deputy Mayor, naming lookout at Stanley Point, Devonport, 1999*



*North Shore City's Deputy Mayor, visiting the maternity ward at North Shore hospital, 1999*



*Dianne opening Torpedo Bay Wharf, 2004*

Karangahape Road, on the old *Kestrel* ferry. *It was a lovely way to get to work. I still love catching the ferry if I am meeting or working in town, but now you barely sit down and you are there. It is a little bit different to the old ferry.*

Devonport was a borough until the local body amalgamation of 1989, which saw the establishment of North Shore City Council. *I was a councillor on the last Devonport Borough Council.* Her involvement in local body politics was, she says, *'just one of those things'*; it came about after the Borough Council refused to guarantee a loan application by her Ngataringa Tennis Club committee for artificial grass courts. She was frustrated but was motivated by a telephone call from her doctor, already a borough councillor, who suggested that she consider standing for the council. She objected at first, but in the end was persuaded; Dianne stood and was elected in 1986.

*In those days the Council role was dominated by middle-aged to older men.* However, there were some women were involved. She became one of four women on the council: Trish Joughin, who was deputy mayor, along with Margaret Fraser, and Val Kearney who

was elected at the same time as Dianne. They were all a number of years older than her. Dianne says that initially there was some opposition to her from the men on council: *'This young, female whipper-snapper'*; however, *I think over time I managed to earn their respect. I had some really neat projects by the end of the term.* She had, for example, responsibility on the last Devonport Borough Council for the oversight of the redevelopment of the old Council works depot at Mount Cambria. The project was to transform the site into a park and it also became a home for the Devonport Museum, preserving it as open space for future generations.

She recalls that it was a very different environment from the one she later experienced as a North Shore City councillor. *In Devonport, there was little forward planning, with budgets prepared on an annual basis.* This experience contrasted greatly with her 18 years on North Shore City Council, when projections for spending were made 10 to 15 years into the future. Dianne was not elected to the City Council at her first attempt in 1989, but was successful in the 1992 local body elections, after being coaxed to stand. Paul Titchener was elected mayor at the same election.

She considers that she *cut her teeth on community development* during her time as a Devonport Borough councillor, which was when she first met Linda Blincko. Blincko was keen to set up a community house in Devonport, similar to the one in Birkenhead. Dianne's fellow male councillors in the main were bemused, *While they didn't openly say it you could see their thinking was: 'What do you need this for? Women are there to cook, and iron, and do the housework.'* *'Why do you need to have these community facilities for people? We don't need this sort of thing.'* She thinks their ideas of what councils should provide were limited to dealing with rubbish and looking after the roads. Her colleague, Trish Joughin, was a strong advocate for the community house, as was Dianne. They managed to persuade the Council to support the initiative with funding and the provision of premises, initially in Kerr Street. Dianne went on to advocate for funding to provide the current community house premises, as well as supporting the creation of the Depot in the old Council works building, and played a huge role in ensuring that the Victoria Theatre survived with charitable trust status.

After North Shore City was established, Dianne feels that there was a lot more interaction between the different communities all over the North Shore. She believes the councillors were made aware of what was happening outside their own area, and as a consequence there was also more funding available for community projects. Dianne served with four North Shore mayors: Paul Titchener, George Gair, George Wood, and Andrew Williams. She was appointed deputy mayor in 1998 *when George [Wood] became mayor. George and I had nine years' working alongside one another in those roles. It was a really good working relationship and we had a huge amount of respect for one another.* One of the highlights of that time was her involvement as chair in the development of the Northern bus corridor along the Northern Motorway.



*I can remember going to meetings and advocating for this busway and getting told it was just a stupid idea. 'It was a waste of money.' 'It was too costly.' 'It would never work.' 'Nobody would use it.' I look back now, and I look at the patronage those buses are getting, and the cars it has taken off the motorway—it's incredible. It's something that I'm particularly proud of.*

Dianne was a member of the establishment committee for the North Harbour Stadium in 1992. Once the project had progressed, she was also an inaugural trustee of the North Harbour Domain and Stadium Trust, which was formed in 1995. The trust ran the stadium until its dis-establishment in 2014 when Regional Facilities Auckland took over the running of the facility.

Another aspect of her involvement with community initiatives as a councillor was her role as a youth advocate for the young people who were part of the Shore Youth Council, and her chairperson role on the North Shore YouthWorX Trust. The call for a youth advocate had come from the community in response for a need to work alongside youth and to identify what support services were needed on the Shore.

Being a youth advocate meant that she attended the Youth Council meetings and the annual youth leadership conference, Converge, where she helped as a mentor. *I thought they were great events—amazing motivational speakers presented at them, and a good cross-section of kids attended and really got involved.*

As Dianne says, it's about supporting youth to develop their own leadership skills and decision-making capability. Rather than presenting on their behalf, she encouraged members of the Shore Youth Council to present their own projects to North Shore City Council. One example of this was when the youth councillors undertook surveys on bus usage and were able to persuade the Council to begin the late night 'Night Rider' bus services. They

also pushed for the development of the PHAB-initiated Youth Space in Takapuna.

*It's all very well for our age group to be making decisions, but you need to have the young people involved because they're the ones who will be paying the rates in the future, and they are our future. It's really good to have their voice.* She draws an analogy between ideas floated by the Youth Council and her own early support for the Northern Busway. *Even though some things initially might seem way out there, frequently they develop into good ideas that provide good future opportunities.* She acted as a mentor and not as a boss. *I mean, for me, it was always, 'Please call me Dianne, I'm not here as councillor. I'm here as a youth advocate and here to support you.'*

Dianne supported the establishment of NS YouthWorX Trust,

an umbrella organisation and point of contact for all youth work on the Shore; YouthWorX was established in 2008. *It was established because there needed to be more attention given to youth and to trying to coordinate the opportunities and the services for youth.* The initial funding came through the Council, and Dianne became chair of the

charitable trust. The role of the chair was governance rather than operational, but Dianne worked closely with Amanda Judd, the first YouthWorX coordinator.

Since the establishment of Auckland Council in 2010, and the dis-establishment of the Shore Youth Council, Dianne feels that the involvement of youth has changed, but is excited about the development of the proposed youth hub. She feels the understanding about what is being done at a community level is now at arm's length from the councillors. As a member of the Devonport-Takapuna Local Board, she believes that board members know what is going on in their area; however, she also thinks that the size of the Auckland Council and the local board

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I have met some incredible, community-minded people along the way and I value the friendships that I have made.