



# Julia Parfitt

Over the many years that Julia has been serving the communities of East Coast Bays as a resident, a teacher, a community board member, a councillor and a deputy mayor, she has gained a deep knowledge of how the area functions, its challenges and its potential. She has been involved in community development in the Bays since the 1970s. Her entry into local body politics came through the encouragement of people she has known and worked alongside over the past 40 years and has become a lifelong career.

Born in Castor Bay, which was then part of the Waitemata County Council, Julia grew up in Murrays Bay, then Campbells Bay. She has then returned full circle as an adult, to live in Murrays Bay for the past 38 years. She describes herself as being *North Shore through and through*, attending Campbells Bay Primary, then Murrays Bay Intermediate, Westlake Girls High School, and doing her final year at Rangitoto College. Julia had an early start to community representation: at Westlake Girls she was on the student council, an elected position, which represented and advocated for the student body. She belonged to numerous groups and clubs.

Julia's father was in the Airforce and later worked at Whenuapai Airforce Base as an air traffic controller, and then at Mangere. The aviation industry was in its infancy in Auckland. Air traffic control was only just beginning to be adopted at that time. Later, when as a city councillor Julia was faced with the proposal to develop Whenuapai as a second commercial airport for Auckland, which she opposed, she was able to draw partly on her father's

understanding that the airport was inadequate and the runway simply too short to be viable. Julia's mother stayed at home and brought up Julia and her three older brothers until Julia entered secondary school.

Julia's earliest memory was walking over the Auckland Harbour Bridge for the first time at the age of three, before it was open to vehicles. The opening of the Bridge heralded the rapid expansion of the North Shore communities, which as a political representative, Julia would later seek to harness and improve. She remembers that each bay along the coast had its own community infrastructure, including post offices, shops, and hubs for community clubs and churches.

Julia studied Political Science and History at Auckland University while also studying at North Shore Teachers Training College. She spent her first teaching year up north at Okaihau College, close to Kaikohe, returning to teach at Sherwood School in Browns Bay, then Target Road School in Glenfield before



*Julia Parfitt, 1991 (Auckland Council Archives Reference: AUC 2012 290)*

moving to Northcross Intermediate. She has also served on the board of trustees for Northcross Intermediate.

By 1989, with the creation of North Shore City, Julia's husband, Graham Parfitt, had served three terms on the East Coast Bays City Council and Julia was quite well-known in the community; this meant that she was not unfamiliar with the territory and demands of political representation. Her own entry into local body affairs was mainly through the encouragement of people she knew in the area who suggested that she stand for the East Coast Bays Community Board. Julia set to work and she relished her role on the community board. *I really liked that sort of grassroots*

*involvement. I think I'm quite community focused. I want to see the best outcomes for people. That's why I'm representing our community, to be an advocate.* While on the community board Julia continued to teach part-time.

Local concern over the need to develop better community social infrastructure, as well as utility infrastructure, had grown on the Shore during the 1970s and '80s. A number of community responses grew in various communities, which saw the creation of community houses and community centres, Citizens Advice Bureaus (CABs), libraries, Plunket and much more. However, it wasn't until the early 1980s that such community services were established in Browns Bay. A Council survey of local residents had found there was considerable need for a mix of local community programmes and social services.

Julia became involved with establishing a community house, a crèche, Plunket offices, and a new library. In September 1992, Mayor Ann Hartley and North Shore City Council's Community Project Committee chairperson, Yvonne Duncan, opened the East Coast Bays Community House, which incorporated space for Plunket and the Browns Bay CAB, in what had been the former East Coast Bays council building. That same year, plans for a separate crèche, library and recreation centre were also in place. By 1993, there were 11 community houses on the North Shore, in Bayview, Beach Haven, Birkdale, East Coast Bays, Devonport, Glenfield, Highbury, Meadowood, Northcote, Belmont and Sunnynook.

Julia has also been involved with the Torbay Historical Society, and has served on the board of Titoki Montessori School, the only community-owned school of its type in Auckland. As chair of the East Coast Bays Community Board, she recommended developing a management plan, for the Browns Bay beach front area. To inform the management plan Julia called for a survey of the needs of local residents to gather information on how they would like to see the beach front area managed, and what could be provided for residents.

In 1994, North Shore City Council mooted a new district plan for the Shore. Having objected to aspects of the plan, Julia then decided to stand for Council at the next elections and, to her surprise, she was elected. Although the district plan was intensifying certain areas, it didn't seem to make any provision for the infrastructure, particularly the social infrastructure, that was required. Her primary platform for election to Council was to ensure proper infrastructure for the growing communities of the East Coast Bays. *Growth should only happen when it's planned for; I suppose that was my election plank.* Julia already understood from her teaching days that local schools couldn't cope with the population growth and that there were no plans to extend them at the time. *When you intensify an area you need to upgrade the facilities to cope with the new population growth.*

Julia was elected to North Shore City Council in 1995. She went on to serve with George Wood and, as deputy mayor, with Andrew Williams up until the establishment of Auckland Council. Julia had chaired the East Coast Bays Community Board for two years, stepping down in 1996. She felt that the local board deserved a chairperson who was a dedicated community board member.

During her time on North Shore City Council, Julia championed infrastructure issues, such as supporting the upgrade and expansion of the Rosedale Water Treatment Plant and the upgrade of the storm water and waste water piping distribution system throughout the area. *It was a huge project. We looked at every metre of pipe to*



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*ensure that we weren't contaminating our land and sea water. Rates were increased at the time to make the necessary investment into this vital service and the expanding demands. As a result, longstanding gains were achieved.*

In 1999, one of the more controversial developments that Julia Parfitt supported, along with some of her fellow councillors (Margaret Miles, Wyn Hoadley, Jenny Kirk and Mayor George Wood), was that Council contribute \$4 million to the creation of a public swimming pool next to the proposed \$36 million Millennium Centre which would be located next door to Rangitoto College. In an interview with the *North Shore Times Advertiser*, Julia was quoted: 'It's not just the waste water and sewerage infrastructure that needs to be in place. It's the social infrastructure that needs to be there too, otherwise we'll have a recipe for social disaster.'<sup>1</sup>

Earlier that same year councillors examined the proposed site for housing development in Long Bay. The *North Shore Times Advertiser* reported, 'Great park safari for councillors'. Jenny Kirk, Margaret Miles, Julia Parfitt, Genevieve Becroft and Tony Holman were given a tour of the structure of the planned area, by four-wheel drive or helicopter.<sup>2</sup>

At the same time, criticism over further development had come from the community. The Long Bay–Okura Great Park Society urged Council to protect 1,000 acres of parkland. North Shore City Council responded by seeking to buy land around the Long Bay Regional Park in partnership with the Auckland Regional Council. At this point the Council purchased 38 hectares of land at Piripiri Point to create a reserve adjacent to the Long Bay Regional Reserve. It would not be until 2010 that the outgoing North Shore City Council was able to secure, at 'the eleventh hour', an agreement with Todd Properties to acquire the 18.7 hectares of heritage-protection zoned land that was created in the exhaustive structural plan process. This battle was waged

largely by the Long Bay–Okura Great Park Society before the Environment Court. A further 4.6 hectares for neighbourhood reserves was also secured as part of this development agreement. *I was extremely pleased to play albeit a small part in this process,* says Julia.

In 2008, Julia took a stand with Mayor Andrew Williams and other councillors who opposed the development of a second commercial airport at Whenuapai Airforce Base. *I was totally supportive of the fact that there should be no commercial airport at Whenuapai, while I supported it continuing to be an Airforce base. This became a real galvanising issue on the North Shore, particularly in this subdivision, because the Albany ward would have been really heavily impacted by the proposal.*

On the creation of Auckland Council in 2010, Julia was elected to the chair of the new Hibiscus and Bays Local Board. She describes the transition to the 'super city' as her biggest challenge to date in local government. *The new prescribed boundaries for our local board area traversed two previous local authorities—Rodney District Council and North Shore City. The challenge was to integrate the different practices, approaches and service levels of the former territories in a manner that appeared as seamless as possible for residents.*

Anticipating what the future might hold, with or without her as a representative, Julia believes that further political restructuring will happen. *I look at how much restructure has happened just within my lifetime. You've gone from a Waitemata County Council, to an East Coast Bays Borough Council, East Coasts Bays City Council, North Shore City, and now Auckland Council. We now have local boards with our own balance sheets. Rather than see yet an even bigger unit of local government created, some people even anticipate it going back to even smaller units of local government.*

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<sup>1</sup> Scott Kara, *North Shore Times Advertiser*, 'Councillors float pool funds plan', 16th March 1999

<sup>2</sup> Cathy Withiel, *North Shore Times Advertiser*, 'Great park safari for councillors', 26th January, 1999

