



Peter White

Peter comes to community building with a widespread knowledge of what works well for communities. He's had a varied career as a teacher, business owner, sports coach and administrator, politician, property investor and finally as a business promoter, as the Takapuna Beach Business Association General Manager. In this role he oversaw the Takapuna town centre revitalisation into a vibrant North Shore centre for business and recreation.

Peter grew up in Henderson in West Auckland, attending Kelston Boys High School where he was deputy head boy and captain of the 1st XV. He studied Physical Education at Otago University before gaining his Diploma of Teaching from Auckland Teachers College. His father, Des, was a grocer. *My dad taught me a lot of the values of customer experience and customer service, which has served me well in many different roles since.* His mother, Heather, was a nurse before becoming a full-time stay-at-home mother, and kept busy running after Peter and his three younger brothers.

Peter qualified as a teacher in 1978, and the following year started work at Selwyn College in Kohimarama. After shifting to the North Shore (originally Torbay, then to Waiake Beach and later Browns Bay) he taught at Long Bay College from 1983 to 1987, heading the school's Community Education programme as well as being appointed head of department for Physical Education. Whilst at Long Bay College, Peter was elected as president of the New Zealand Triathlon Association and founded both

the Auckland and New Zealand Secondary Schools Triathlon Associations, introducing triathlon as a sport to New Zealand secondary schools in 1985. This involved a considerable amount of lobbying and numerous rejections from the Principals' Association.

Wareham's Health and Fitness Centres were the principal sponsors of the Auckland Secondary Schools Triathlon Association and, after developing a strong relationship with the managing director, Peter was approached to project manage the building of a new health and fitness centre in Fred Thomas Drive, Takapuna. The following year (1987) Peter became a partner and general manager of the New Zealand chain of Wareham Health and Fitness Centres.

He recalls that *it was a steep learning curve in terms of understanding how to manage a business, but the customer service skills that my father taught me came in very handy*, as did the time spent at Long Bay College coordinating night classes, and his part-time work at the YMCA gym whilst studying at Auckland



Peter on his first day at school



Strength and conditioning coach to the NZ Barbarians team, 1996



Peter's wedding to Jayne with their four children who comprised the wedding party

Teachers College. It was during his time at the YMCA Sports Conditioning Centre that Peter became experienced in the fitness testing of elite athletes and sports teams, including the Kiwi Rugby League, New Zealand Cricket and Auckland Rugby teams.

Selwyn College was a pioneer in the use of video cameras and Peter began filming matches of the rugby league teams he was training, eventually establishing VidCom, a part-time business, recording sports matches, weddings and other social occasions.

After five years, Peter sold his shares in Wareham's Health and Fitness Centres and purchased the Browns Bay branch, renaming it Beachside Health and Fitness. He and his wife, Jayne, owned and managed Beachside from 1993 until 2016, building strong relationships with numerous generations of families who remained members over the 23 years.

In 1992, Peter was approached by the North Harbour Rugby Union to become the strength and conditioning coach for their provincial side. This was during the early years of Super Rugby.

We toured South Africa six times over six years, three years in the Super 10 competition (an enlightening experience as North Harbour were the first provincial side to tour South Africa after the end of the apartheid regime), and then for another three years when rugby went professional, as trainer to the Chiefs in the Super 12 competition. In 1996 he was appointed strength and conditioning coach for the New Zealand Barbarians side, coached by John Hart. The side, which included All Black greats Jonah Lomu, Christian Cullen, Sean Fitzpatrick and Zinzan Brooke, played and beat the England team at Twickenham.

Since 1999 Peter has worked each year as the New Zealand Rugby-appointed liaison officer, managing the IRB Tour agreement with numerous international sides including Ireland, England, France, Wales, Scotland, Italy, Argentina and Samoa. The highlight of this role for Peter was working with the British and Irish Lions during their six-week tour of New Zealand in 2005.

It is a great honour and a marvellous experience to tour New Zealand with an overseas team. Getting to line up in front of the All Blacks and watch them do the haka, sitting on the bench during matches, watching the team prepare in the dressing rooms before games and, most importantly, making some outstanding friends throughout the world. During this period Peter also became involved in the property market, working as a property buyer for investors and himself investing in both the residential and commercial markets.

Then, in 2004, Peter stood in the local body elections for North Shore City Council and was elected as a councillor from 2004 to 2007 and as a community board member from 2004 to 2010. Peter attributes the strong networks established through the gym, teaching, rugby, and most importantly the North Harbour Club, as being instrumental to his election success. The North Harbour Club has awarded over \$1.65 million to help North Harbour youth achieve excellence in a number of different sectors: arts, innovation, music, education, sport and service to the community (AIMES). As a former AIMES awards judge and trustee of the North Harbour Club, Peter is continuously inspired by the amazing talent of those who have received awards since 1995, including singer Lorde, golfer Lydia Ko and Olympic gold medallist Tom Ashley.

Peter found being a city councillor a wonderful experience, serving, amongst a number of other portfolios, as deputy chair of the Community Services and Parks Committee. Being a councillor not only enabled him to serve his community but also presented an opportunity for personal growth. *I think one of the biggest things I learnt as a councillor was that there can be two rights.* He recalls that, even after researching and talking to other people about an issue before establishing a position that he felt was best for the community, during a debate new ideas and outlooks would be presented that were equally as compelling. He also learnt the necessity to speak concisely and to the point during his time as a councillor.



Peter's swearing in as a North Shore City councillor, 2004

Peter believed that his support for the campaign not to dispose of land occupied by the air force base at Whenuapai led to his failure to be re-elected as a councillor for a second term. *I was of the opinion that you don't get rid of infrastructure until you know that you it won't be needed for future growth.* However, despite these views, he was elected to a second term on the East Coast Bays Community Board taking on the job of deputy chair.

In 2007, Peter accepted a contract role as North Shore City Tourism, Economic Development and Events manager, being responsible for organising community events such as Music in the



Park and Movies in the Park, international sporting events (both hockey and weightlifting Commonwealth Games qualifying tournaments), Takapuna Tri and Takapuna Criterium, and the Devonport Wine and Food Festival. Whilst in this role, he was shoulder-tapped to become general manager for the Takapuna Beach Business Association (TBBA). The TBBA had been set up in the 1930s to help foster business within the town centre of Takapuna. However, as membership was voluntary, income was never guaranteed. Council subsequently encouraged business associations throughout Auckland to become 'mainstreets' (and later 'business improvement districts', BIDs), which allowed Council to apply a special rating to all business-zoned properties and ensure that business associations were sustainable.

Peter enlisted a strong, loyal and supportive sponsorship family, which enabled him to grow the combined income to approximately \$500,000 per annum. As general manager, Peter was accountable to businesses, ratepayers and the Council. He developed strategic and marketing plans, with associated budgets, to bring community events to the area, which local businesses could then leverage off, and to provide a profile for the town centre, including the Takapuna Night Markets, annual Christmas Carnival and the French Film Festival.

All of this planning had the aim of bringing life to the city centre of Takapuna, making it a more vibrant welcoming centre. *Customer experience is something that we spent a lot of time on. We wanted Takapuna to be the customer experience capital of the world, especially in these times of internet shopping. To give the very best experience—the point of difference to online shopping.* Today, there are nearly 50 BIDs in Auckland, but Peter feels this is *too many*. He argues that some are *very small with little funding* and thinks that amalgamation, 'lined up' with local board areas, would be a good idea. *I believe that would be*



a more sustainable model, and feels that Devonport, Takapuna, and Milford should align. You develop a retail strategy where each has something slightly different from the others, complementing rather than competing and providing a good reason for people to go from one community to the other.

Nevertheless, Peter had always found the work *interesting and extremely satisfying*. He remembers that when he began working with the town centre it was *littered* with ‘two dollar shops’. The majority of premises on Hurstmere Road were on month-by-month tenancies because developers were buying the properties for redevelopment. Things changed with the Global Financial Crisis in 2008.

The TBBA had good governance support and strong leadership, initially with Kevin Schwass as the chairman, and then under Dave Donaldson. The TBBA established a vision and strategic plan for the revitalisation of Takapuna, and worked closely with landholders and Council to encourage appropriate development in line with that vision. *Dave Donaldson was a pioneer in this respect, opening both the Takapuna Beach Café and the Department Stores, magnificent destination retail and hospitality that attracted people from throughout Auckland. Alan Wiltshire, followed suit and developed the McKenzie’s complex, and John Copson and Ben Cook have similarly established quality destination precincts. We had over 100 ‘to let’ signs throughout Takapuna when we started and when I resigned we were down to about a 1 per cent retail vacancy rate.*

Whilst the TBBA has been established to support and facilitate business within Takapuna, Peter also believes that the importance of community engagement to build vibrant communities cannot be underestimated. *The community are our customers, so even though we represent our members, the community are our customers. The Business Association took a holistic view, taking an active and leadership role in supporting the creation of great public spaces, such as the redevelopment of Hurstmere Green, the Anzac Street car park and Hurstmere Road. We felt that if we could build a town centre*

that people wanted to visit, that they wanted to live in and work in, then business would be successful accordingly.

In 2010, Aidan Bennett, president of the North Harbour Club and managing director of Benefitz, approached Peter to support a local magazine. A memorandum of understanding was signed between Benefitz and the TBBA, which laid out the parameters for the sort of material that would be published in *Channel* magazine. *It had to be positive, and it had to go across all sectors—education, sports, politics and business—so that people would want to read it. It was to be a major voice to promote our businesses. Our part of the deal was to get our members to advertise through it, but also, it enabled us to let the community know what we were trying to do in Takapuna.* The magazine has proved to be very popular.

Another initiative Peter is proud of is ‘Techapuna’, a joint promotional venture with Auckland Tourism Events and Economic Development (ATEED) that encourages information technology businesses to take advantage of Takapuna’s outstanding natural environment, proximity to the CBD and cheaper office space to establish or relocate in the town centre and collaborate with other IT businesses, sharing resources and experience. *Techapuna provides a mechanism to keep our bright youth in New Zealand. By working with schools and Massey University, we are able to establish an opportunity for students to gain work experience and internships with some of the world’s most innovative IT companies.*

After eight years with the TBBA, Peter *semi-retired* in August 2015. He now volunteers his time as a justice of the peace, continues his involvement in rugby managing the North Harbour Mitre 10 Cup and Sevens sides, does some contract work for Auckland Council, and has a sponsor’s and member’s relationship management role with the North Harbour Club. His goal, however, *is to spend more time with my wife, children and grandchildren.* Peter celebrated his 60th birthday in 2016, and fulfilled a long-term ambition by taking Jayne, their four children and their partners, and six grandchildren to Disneyland.



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