



Wyn Hoadley

Wyn has held an interest in politics since she first joined the Labour Party as a teenager. As a political scientist, she was particularly interested in the functionality of local government and the representation of women in local government, for which she became a strong advocate on the North Shore during the 1970s and '80s. In 1986, Wyn was one of only a few women who had ever been elected mayor in New Zealand. She has contributed her time and energy to many community groups on the Shore over the past 40 years and applied her legal knowledge to planning, environmental management, building law and alcohol licensing.

Wyn was born in Indonesia during the Second World War. My parents were of Dutch origin and they were both born there as well. In 1943, the Japanese military arrived and Wyn, her mother and her three-week-old brother were sent to internment camps in Indonesia. My parents were separated. These were very, very dreadful times in our lives. After we were liberated we went to Holland where many of our relatives lived. I spent the next three years in Holland. I didn't go to school until I was seven because my brother and I were so sick.

In 1949, the family immigrated to New Zealand as her father, newly qualified as a geologist, had a job offer with the New Zealand Geological Survey as a field geologist based in Napier. *I learnt to speak English in a big hurry.* Wyn attended Hastings Street School, Napier Intermediate and Napier Girls High until the Fifth Form (Year 11), when her father was transferred to the Hutt Valley. She attended Naenae College for her last three high school years.

A good athlete, Wyn had dreams of representing New Zealand in netball and wanted to study physical education at Otago University. Unfortunately, a serious netball injury to her ankle put paid to those dreams and so she went to Wellington Teachers Training College instead. There she met Margaret Shields, later a Labour MP, *and we both became very involved with the Labour Party and women's issues.*

When she was 16, Wyn joined the Labour Party, and she has been a member ever since. She gives her reasons for this. *First, it was a Labour government that gave my father a job, and without that job we would never have been able to restart our lives. Second, it was a Labour government that gave us a state house in Napier. Third, [it] was a Labour government that promoted quality healthcare and education for everybody. I've never forgotten that. And even more important I was vehemently opposed to the development and use of nuclear weapons. That's why I joined YCND (Youth Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament) and Nuclear-free New Zealand.*

At Naenae College, I had friends with whom I could talk with about issues like racial equality, human rights and nuclear-free New Zealand. It would be fair to say I became politicised at that time. She says that her parents were quite conservative and did not understand her point of view about these issues. They did not like to discuss things like colonialism, anti-colonialism and racism. We did not really talk about it and when we did it would normally finish up in a big argument.

Wyn enjoyed teachers college. She then went to teach at Ngati Toa Primary School in Titahi Bay, just north of Wellington, in 1961. *I was trying to encourage the children to be interested in current affairs and world politics. We'd always have a daily session about what was in the newspaper.* When her parents moved to Christchurch in 1962, Wyn decided that she would like to complete her BA degree, which she had started at Victoria University while at Wellington Teachers College. She majored in Education and Political Science.

In her last year of study (1965), Wyn taught art and music at Selwyn House, a Parents' National Education Union (PENU) private primary school in Christchurch. Then she got the chance to go overseas with a group of friends. *We went to London. I had no money. I taught at Balham Boys' High School where I was a glorified babysitter.* She also visited her grandmother in Holland and hitchhiked around Europe with a friend for about four months. Wyn's next move was to newly independent Gambia in West Africa, where she worked for a Methodist Mission-run state high school teaching Biology, French and Geography, and coached netball and music. *I was there for two years from 1966 to 1968. I loved it, I didn't want to leave. I had a wonderful time. I travelled*

right through West Africa into East Africa and visited a friend who was teaching in Nairobi.

Her interest in Africa was first sparked by collecting stamps as a child. Wyn had also studied a Stage 3 paper on the politics of developing and newly independent nations at Canterbury University in 1964. At the time, Austin Mitchell, the British Labour MP and author of *The Half Gallon Quarter Acre Pavlova Paradise*, was teaching in the Political Science Department at Canterbury University. *He was an excellent lecturer, very dynamic and charismatic;* he lectured on Africa, where many countries were gaining their independence in the 1960s.¹

Wyn left Africa when several friends in the United States encouraged her to apply for a scholarship to study for a PhD in Political Science at Washington University in St Louis, Missouri.

Wyn was successful in her application for a scholarship, and graduated with an MA in Political Science. Although she had been intending to focus her PhD research on African creative writing, she changed focus to local government. One of her lecture topics was local

government in the United States and this made what had previously seemed a boring subject into something really engaging. *I needed a PhD topic. In New Zealand we had the Auckland Regional Authority (ARA) then, which I think was unique in the world in that it was a multi-functional regional body. Most regional bodies at the time in NZ and USA were single-purpose functional bodies, such as a rabbit board, parks board, catchment board or drainage board.* She decided to base her thesis on a comparison between the Auckland Regional Authority and similar regional bodies proposed to be established in the United States of America. Her initial research was published in a scholarly journal in the States.

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While in St Louis, Wyn met her husband, Steve, who was a Political Science professor at Washington University. The couple married in early 1969 and decided to start a family. It was the height of the war in Vietnam, which prompted them to come to New Zealand as they felt it would be a better place to bring up children; besides which, they were also keen on sailing and wanted to buy a yacht. Steve was offered a position in the Political Studies Department at Auckland University in 1972. They settled in Ewen Street at Hauraki Corner on the North Shore where they stayed for the next 30 years.

Wyn was keen to continue with her PhD research and had hopes of teaching in the same department as Steve at Auckland University. These hopes were squashed after an interview with the head of department in 1972, who explained that it was not policy to employ married couples in the same department. *I was seriously angry. I did not know what to do but I certainly did not want to make a fuss. I quietly went home, whereupon I took my research and the data and burnt it all! I retrospect I can say that I did not handle myself well. I acted extremely immaturely. I didn't know what else to do.*

Wyn had been in touch with Margaret Shields when she came back to Auckland, and rang Margaret who listened, as good friends do, and suggested that Wyn go along with her to a Labour Party conference in Wellington. *It was 1972, when Germaine Greer came to the Town Hall. I took my daughter, Jennie, who was a year old, in a backpack, wearing a Women's Liberation singlet. Women's rights and equal pay for women were huge issues, as was childcare.* She joined a Women's Liberation Group based at Auckland University, and became interested in the lack of representation of women in local government.

In 1974, Wyn stood for the Auckland Regional Authority on a Labour Party ticket, but was not elected. Looking back, she thinks that it was better to be independent in local government. In 1975, Margaret Shields and Wyn stood for Parliament, Margaret

for the Karori Electorate and Wyn for the North Shore Electorate. Both were unsuccessful. During this time, Wyn began giving courses for women who were interested in standing for local government, such as city and borough councils, the Regional Authority and the Harbour Board. *I always said we [women] may not succeed in getting elected but if we don't stand then the chances of us getting elected is zero.* She recalls Northcote's mayor, Jean Sampson: *She was really great and somewhat of a role model. She was competent, she had a lovely sense of humour, a no-nonsense type of person, level-headed.*

Wyn's courses were sponsored by the (then) Workers Educational Association (WEA), the University of Auckland Continuing Education Department and various women's organisations such as the Women's Electoral Lobby. Courses were held in Auckland, Manukau, Howick, Pakuranga and Glenfield. Each course usually consisted of ten different topics, ranging from women in the work force, the importance of trade unions, equal pay, quality childcare, women's health and education, to 'how to' topics such as 'how to run a campaign to get elected' and 'how to be an effective advocate'.

I would take my class members to council meetings to familiarise them with meeting procedure and local issues, and have them sit in on councillors' deliberations. These courses were well attended, and were successful in encouraging women to put their names forward for election.

In 1980, Wyn stood for Labour in the East Coast Bays by-election, but was again unsuccessful. In the 1984 general election Wyn was approached to put her name forward to be the Labour candidate in the newly created Glenfield electorate, but turned it down when she realised that she did not want to spend time away from her family. She says she 'absolutely' does not regret her decision. She had stood for election at the local and national level seven times before she was elected to the Takapuna City Council in a by-election in 1981.



*Auckland mayors, 18th October, 1986
From left: Mrs Hoadley, Mr Shadbolt, Mr Curtis, Dame Catherine Tizard
New Zealand Herald/newspix.co.nz*

She recalls that the impetus for her to first stand for Council in 1977 was when she became aware of a proposal to build rooms for the North Shore Bridge Club in Killarney Park on the shores of Lake Pupuke, which Takapuna City Council supported and she opposed. *When you're playing bridge you don't really need to be looking at a lake. The people who play bridge are seriously concentrating on their cards and they wouldn't have a clue what was going on outside the window. If anything is going to be built there, it's got to be lake related. I thought, we've got to fight this.* Wyn also remembers the city councillors and Mayor Fred Thomas as being *very conservative* on issues such as community development.

In 1981, three other women had also been elected as councillors: Peggy Phillips, Barbara Durbin and Ivy Mossop; all had built up good contacts with their communities. Wyn was made deputy chair of the planning committee; Councillor John Osborne was chair. One of the first hearings that Wyn sat on was for an expansion of the Centrepoint Commune in Albany. She recalls that there were also hearings at the time involving new developments in Albany and infill housing in the Glenfield area. *We also had people wanting to develop in Long Bay and we had issues with Takapuna Beach and people seeking to erect high-rise buildings along the beach front.*

One of the issues she was keen to progress was the establishment of a Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) in Takapuna, an initiative which Mayor Fred Thomas did not support at the time.

Another issue was the need to foster community development. We needed a community worker or community advisor to help set up community centres. She compares the situation in Takapuna City, where anything to do with community development was said to be an issue for central government, with the situation in Birkenhead and Beach Haven, where community houses were thriving and the community was benefiting. I'd say to councillors, It's about being community focused, empowering people in the community to brainstorm what their own needs are and to then have ownership of it. We should be making decisions only as a result of consultation with the community. Then, in 1983, the first community development officer for the area, Fay Price (later Fay Freeman), was appointed by Takapuna City Council.

Wyn felt that her role as a city councillor was to work directly with the community. She was given the opportunity to do so when she was assigned responsibility for managing the stewardship of Lake Pupuke, a challenge she was keen to take on. *By the early 1980s, the lake had become extremely eutrophied. It was polluted and really in bad shape. Earlier that year the Crown had transferred stewardship of the lake to the Takapuna City Council. The Crown still owned the lake but the management of it was handed over to Takapuna City Council. I thought, What a wonderful issue to get involved with and we can do some really good community development modelling here.* Wyn set up the Lake Pupuke Management Committee, comprised of local residents and experts. Wyn recalls being rowed around the lake and seeing what had been dumped in it: car bodies, refrigerators, old stoves and other rubbish. Both the canoe club and the rowing club had clubrooms on the lake's edge and its members were extremely happy that the lake was going to be cleaned up. A health analysis of the

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lake was commissioned, and Wyn encouraged residents to attend Council meetings and speak in favour of cleaning up the lake and its surrounds. *Here was an issue which was very cut and dry, and it was a real environmental public health issue. That was the birth of the first Lake Pupuke Management Plan.*

In 1986, Wyn decided to run for mayor of Takapuna City; she won. She encouraged Genevieve Becroft and Jan O'Connor to stand for Council on her ticket and was delighted when they were elected. *I had a seriously good mayoral campaign and I had up to 250 people working for me. Our son, Ben, has vivid memories of leafleting and mending broken hoardings.* Wyn was one of very few women mayors in New Zealand at the time. One of the first things she did

after being elected mayor was to call a meeting to encourage a collegial atmosphere in the new council.

This was because the majority of councillors, apart from Genevieve and Jan, had stood on an opposing ticket and were about to carve up Council committee chair and deputy-chair positions amongst themselves. I remember the meeting being cordial and effective with the result that Council meetings over the following three years were productive and non-partisan.

A sculpture of Wyn as mayor, by Mirek Sulkowski, was presented, as part of Takapuna City's 75th Jubilee celebrations, to the Takapuna Library in 1988, when the new library was officially opened. *The new library was a highlight for me as it was built and completed during my three years as mayor.* The sculpture is located on the library's first floor.

In November 1989, with a call for amalgamation from the Minister for Local Government, Michael Bassett, Takapuna became part of the larger North Shore City. Wyn stood for the



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Taken at the Takapuna Library 20th anniversary. Wyn Hoadley with Geoff Chamberlain, chief librarian; Helen Woodhouse, deputy librarian, is next to Peggy Phillips (left, seated)

mayoralty of North Shore, but lost to Ann Hartley. *It was a defining moment. I lost out on that mayoralty and, quite frankly, I didn't expect to. A friend of mine grabbed hold of me and took me to the Takapuna Golf Course every morning for nine holes after which she'd take me to the pub and buy me a beer, then send me home. She did that for three weeks.*

After all that golf, Wyn decided she would study for a law degree, something she had long wanted to do. *I started off like everybody else and did the whole degree in three years and I got LLB (Hons). It's the (Hons) part that I'm very proud of.* She then went to work for Hesketh Henry, an Auckland-based law firm, and was admitted to the bar in 1992. During her time at Hesketh Henry, Wyn started the Barrier Free New Zealand Trust with Alexia Pickering, to promote urban design that provides quality access for people with disabilities. Wyn was chair of the Trust for the subsequent nine years and Alexia has continued to work tirelessly to achieve genuine accessibility reform. *We tried to push through legislation that promoted the accessible journey. The new Building Act 1991 went some way to address accessibility issues for people with disabilities; for example, when a new building is built that would be open to the public, it has to be accessible. To a large extent this has been achieved.*

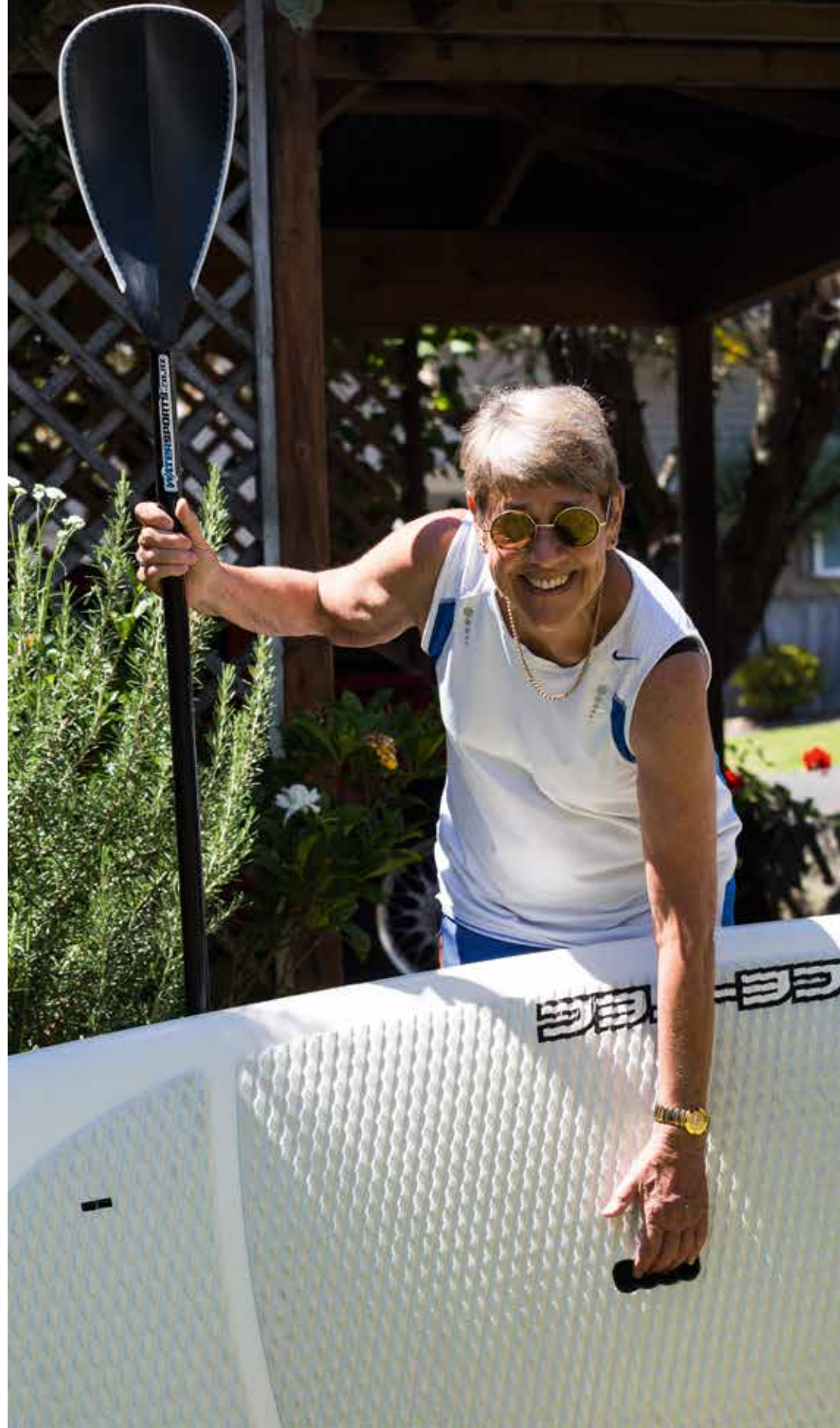
In October 1992, Wyn again stood in the local body elections for North Shore City and was elected as a councillor. She chaired the Regulatory and Hearings Committee from 1992 until 2003. These were years that transformed the North Shore, with new residential, retail and commercial developments in Albany, the building of the North Shore Busway, a significant growth in infill housing in the already established parts of the city, financial concerns about how to pay for traffic and parking solutions, rebuilding of the city's waste water treatment plant, building of retirement villages for seniors, and learning to work with new legislation such as the Resource Management Act and the Building Act.

In 1992, Wyn's daughter, Jennie Hoadley, was elected to the Auckland Regional Council and served for two terms as a North Shore City representative. *It was very special for me to have Jennie actively involved in local government at such a young age [she was 21]. We had so much to talk about and her passion was regional parks.*

In 2004, Wyn then stood for the Auckland Regional Council (ARC) and was appointed chair of the Council's Finance Committee. This was an important appointment at a time when Ports of Auckland and other regional assets had become the responsibility the ARC. She also sat on hearings for the new Auckland Regional Plan where the perennial issue of future Auckland growth was debated, a debate that continues today.

She was a member of the Waitemata District Health Board (WDHB) from 2007 to 2010 and chaired the North Shore Hospital Advisory Committee. This was at a time when the planning for a new emergency wing, a high dependency unit, availability of elective surgery, a new mental health unit and a new parking facility at North Shore Hospital commenced.

In 2008, Wyn collaborated with former North Shore City Mayor George Wood, and together they wrote and presented an extensive submission to the Royal Commission on Auckland Governance. She believed that the new council would be less democratic than before as there would be fewer councillors representing larger areas. *What I'm seeing today, is the rise of small neighbourhood groups like Castor Bay Ratepayers and Kennedy Park Preservation Society, in response to ratepayers' concern about the loss of belonging. Whether or not it is any better today, your guess is as good as mine. But I think we have lost that sense of community and belonging on the Shore.*





Wyn then spent time in the Coromandel in 2010, where she and Steve own a property in Thames, and she became a member of the Coromandel District Council; she chaired its Regulatory and Hearings Committee for one term until 2013. She enjoyed the experience of promoting disability and positive ageing strategies for the district, was a member of the Council's new district plan committee, and actively sought changes to the manner in which the Council undertook its resource management and building obligations.

Among her other appointments has been time as chancellor of Auckland University of Technology (AUT), chair of the National Animal Ethics Advisory Committee, chair of the National Library Trustees, involvement with New Zealand Opera, the Netball Charitable Trust, North Shore Hospital Foundation Board and the Michael King Writers' Centre. She is patron of the North Shore Performing Arts Competitions Society and the Sunnybrae Bowling Club, positions she has held for some 30 years. She is also patron of the Thames Community Centre.

Today Wyn and Steve enjoy living in Castor Bay, where Wyn goes longboarding as often as she can, has joined a reading group, a memoir writing group, a ukulele group and the MX5 Club. Wyn was awarded the Queen's Service Order (QSO) in 2004. She still practises as a barrister and undertakes contract work for Auckland Council.

Wyn has fond memories as she looks back on her political career and involvement in community. *I wouldn't have done it all if I hadn't wanted to. I have been more than rewarded because I've always had the support of Steve, our children, Jennie and Ben, and my mother, Mary Kingma, who lived in Belmont and Milford. Throughout the years, I have made some wonderful friends.*

¹ Austin Mitchell, *The Half Gallon Quarter Acre Pavlova Paradise*, Christchurch, Whitcombe and Tombs, 1972



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