

# Winery suspends helipad request

A controversial helipad proposal, opposed by the Waiheke Local Board and Quiet Sky Waiheke, was suspended by the applicant last week.

The initial resource consent application for a helipad at Onetangi winery Obsidian was lodged in March and had been processing on and off for a lengthy period following Auckland Council requests for more information and several reworked proposals.

It's not known why Obsidian suspended the resource consent application for a helipad at the 22 Makiri Road winery and *Gulf News* was unable to reach the owners.

In July, Auckland Council put the initial application on hold as it sought further information after council's consultant

planner said a property at 123 Sea View Road would be affected by noise levels in excess of the allowed limit.

Council's planner also asked for a more robust assessment of cumulative noise effects, including other helicopter movements in the area, and said a house used for visitor accommodation at 109 Sea View Road was not considered in relation to adverse noise effects.

As a result, Obsidian's planner at Isle Land Planning lodged a revised resource consent application, moving the proposed helipad from an open paddock north-west of the 22 Makiri Road property to a more central location near established grapevines.

The application had said flights would

be limited to the daytime, with up to seven single-engine flights permitted per day or a maximum of 10 single-engine helicopter movements per three-day rolling average period.

But that did not appease members of Quiet Sky Waiheke, who have been vocal about their concerns around the cumulative effects of choppers above Waiheke and who said in a statement that the revised application was an "outrage and an insult to Onetangi residents and the wider Waiheke community".

The applicants for the Obsidian helipad can continue the suspension for up to 20 working days, after which, unless the application is formally withdrawn, processing will resume. • *Sophie Boladeras*

## Accommodation providers 'gutted' council to appeal bed tax

Auckland Council is seeking leave to appeal a decision that deemed its Accommodation Providers Targeted Rate (APTR) invalid last month.

The 10 November Court of Appeal decision was celebrated by many Waiheke accommodation providers who have vocally opposed what became known as the "bed tax" since its inception and council's announcement that it's looking to appeal in the Supreme Court was met with dismay.

A spokesperson for the Auckland branch of Hospitality New Zealand told *Gulf News* that the APTR case had been an emotional and financial battle from the start.

"The news that the council has decided to appeal the Court of Appeal's decision is deflating, however not surprising. It truly is gutting knowing we are going into another hard summer, financial support is now not available for our businesses, and the council is seeking to continue to spend ratepayer money and stand by its decision to target the most vulnerable businesses; who live and do business in our community, hire local people, and are an integral part of Auckland's destination strategy."

Waiheke accommodation provider Edward Coutts says the APTR is fraught with problems. In 2018, he presented a 1345-name petition to Parliament requesting an investigation into the implementation of the APTR rating system and calling for Waiheke to be exempt.

"My argument was that the APTR was fraught with problems and totally illegal.

It just didn't work from day one. It wasn't a targeted rate. It's extremely disappointing that council is seeking leave to appeal, but it's not surprising. I'm hopeful the appeal doesn't go through."

Auckland Council first approved the targeted rate in June 2017 for the 2017/18 financial year as a way to help pay for visitor attractions and major events.

Mayor Phil Goff called it a "common-sense tool" that "ensures accommodation providers who directly benefit from tourism are contributing to the costs associated with promoting events and marketing Auckland to the world".

Last week, an Auckland Council spokesperson said council considers that there are good grounds to appeal the Court of Appeal's decision and that it's "appropriate" and in the "broader public interest" for it to seek leave to appeal to the country's highest court.

"As the question of an appeal is now before the Supreme Court, it would not be appropriate for us to make any further comment at this time." • *Sophie Boladeras*

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