

Brothels to replace the dairy?

Howick/Pakuranga

by Lucy Arthur, Nic Daley and Grace Edwards

The suburbs of Howick and Pakuranga could be described as a slice of middle New Zealand.

The middle-to-high income residential suburbs in Auckland are a place where families can bring up their children in relative safety and the elderly can retire.

But, with decriminalisation of prostitution, residents have had to face the possibility that brothels could be set up in the Howick and Pakuranga communities.

The Manukau Brothel Bylaw has been passed and takes effect on July 1, 2004, but there were hurdles along the way.

Judging from the written submissions, there are three sections of the bylaw that concern Howick and Pakuranga residents the most — the location of brothels, their proximity to schools and churches, and what signs brothels can display.

Manukau's bylaw restricts brothels to zones of bulk retail and industry, which the council says are the "most appropriate and least sensitive" areas for brothels to be established.

There are only a small number of these areas in Howick and Pakuranga.

The council estimates there are ten large-scale brothels already established in Manukau, most operating in business zone.

Max Smitheram, senior planner for special projects of the Manukau City Council, said there are currently no large-scale brothels in Howick.

He was aware of one brothel in Pakuranga, Aquarius, on Torrens Road.

There are an unknown number of small home-based brothels in the area.

This type of brothel may have been classed as a "home-enterprise" in the district plan, but the brothel bylaw bans all brothels from residential and rural areas.

This move seems to be supported by most Howick and Pakuranga residents in their submissions to Manukau City Council.

The city's bylaw states brothels in business districts are not permitted within 250m of sensitive community facilities.

These facilities include: childcare services, kindergartens, schools, libraries, recreation centres, cultural centres, public halls, scout and guide dens, marae, churches and places of worship.

Funeral parlours and children's playgrounds located on a council reserve were added to the list before the bylaw was adopted.



LONELY: Aquarius, in Torrens Rd, is one of the only brothels in the Howick and Pakuranga area.

Also, brothels are not allowed to be visible from the main road entrance of a school, place of worship or other sensitive activity.

Pakuranga councillor Dick Quax said the location of brothels is one of the main concerns facing the public and council at this stage.

"The issue is the locality of brothels in what we'd call sensitive areas — schools, daycare, churches — those kinds of areas."

Manukau's 250m buffer zone is the same as that imposed in the Auckland City bylaw.

Many Howick and Pakuranga residents said a greater distance between brothels and community facilities are needed in the Manukau bylaw.

Maxim Institute communications assistant Amanda McGrail said it is unsafe to have children walking on footpaths where syringes and other dangerous rubbish could cause injury.

"Brothels are seen as being not particularly safe. Men are coming and going at all hours...and there is no way of regulating rubbish such as syringes which can be left there."

Andrew Brown, senior minister at Pakuranga Baptist Church, argued for a buffer zone.

"There would be an issue if brothels were to cluster together," he said.

It is a contradiction to have a brothel located within walking distance of a church, said Mr Brown.

"In a sense we seek to build a society in which these places aren't necessary. Having them near to us would be a negative and discouraging influence."

On the other hand, the prostitutes collective said in its council submission it is unusual that places of worship are concerned with the buffer zone, as brothels have long been operating close to or alongside churches.

"It is difficult to believe that now prostitution has been decriminalised,

there is more likelihood of the male worshippers being seduced by the brothel next door than there was under the previous criminalised legislation."

Other councils around the country are likely to impose similar bylaws regarding buffer zones.

Christchurch City Council is yet to decide, although draft plans indicate that there will be few restrictions, instead indicating general areas where brothels can locate, such as the CBD.

Signage is another component of the bylaw that was subject to debate as councils decided on restrictions.

In Nelson, the council chief executive has the power to either ban or allow signs outside brothels if their draft bylaw is passed, reported *The Nelson Mail*.

In New Plymouth a massage parlour sign across the road from the library was allowed to stay as no bylaw decisions had been made, *The Daily News* reported.

Under the Manukau bylaw, signs can only show the name of the brothel operator, the name of the business, the phone number, street address, and are limited to certain areas.

"No person may place any signage that is visible from a public place and that advertises commercial sexual services on or in any building or structure other than in the business 4, 5 or 6 zones," states the bylaw.

A number of submissions from Howick and Pakuranga residents raised concerns that these guidelines are not restrictive enough.

"There is no way that they need signage as large as they are permitting," said Pakuranga resident Andre van Heerdan, who made a submission in February.

Mr van Heerdan thought there was

enough advertising around as it is.

"The brothels don't need it. Certainly the community doesn't need it."

Mr Quax said that signs with flashing and neon lights were allowed as long as there was nothing sexually explicit or offensive.

"Someone can run lights outside a building as long as it's not sexually explicit or causing anyone offence."

The bylaw bans sandwich boards and portable signs, but allows signs on buildings. The Auckland bylaw has similar specifications, although it does not allow neon and flashing lights and sign size is restricted to 1m by 0.3m.

The final bylaw was amended so that clause 5.1(b) read: "The sign shall not display words or images or models (human or mannequin) which in the opinion of the council are sexually explicit, lewd or otherwise offensive; and the shape or form of the sign itself shall not convey an image which in the opinion of the council is sexually explicit, lewd or otherwise offensive."

The architect of the reform, MP Tim Barnett, believes decriminalising prostitution makes sex workers less vulnerable to exploitation by clients and brothel operators.

He said under the new legislation, the dangers associated with street soliciting should decline as prostitutes can seek help from police without incriminating themselves.

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Shore still waiting for sex bylaw

North Shore

by Edward Gay

Prostitution on the North Shore is yet to be regulated.

Auckland City has by-laws to control it, but the North Shore City Council is still in the planning process.

Meanwhile, prostitutes are working out of 40 homes on the North Shore, says Peter Pearson of the New Zealand Prostitutes' Collective.

Mr Pearson says it is safer that way as prostitutes are likely to have support nearby in case of danger.

"It also means the prostitute can pick and choose, so she won't get a carload of boys turning up after the rugby

for a bit of nooky."

As yet, the North Shore City Council has not decided whether to make changes to the district plan or to create by-laws to enable the council a degree of control over the sex industry.

The council is focusing on controlling the size of advertisements and determining suitable locations, with the possibility of banning brothels from residential areas, says Trevor Mackie, environmental policy manager at the North Shore City Council.

"There's a split on this amongst council members," says Mr Mackie.

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20 and then on to the community boards in April and May," says Mr Mackie.

The proposed changes will also go to public consultation.

However, North Shore City mayor George Wood says: "I don't think there'll be much public consultation on this, though."

Mr Wood does not agree with the Prostitution Reform Act.

"We're sending young New Zealanders to the scrap heap," says Mr Wood.

However, Mr Pearson of the Prostitutes Collective says the Prostitution Act is there to protect young people and that prostitution has always existed on the North Shore, even among young people.

"I was born and bred in Birkenhead and there were young boys and girls cracking it on the street when I was a teenager," says Mr Pearson.



RIDE 'EM COWBOY: Mustangs in Albany continues to operate.