

Campaign

# Generation gap plagues councils

By Pippa O'Rourke

It was six years ago that 18-year-old Paula Gillon made headlines worldwide when she landed a seat on her local council.

With a provocative billboard campaign, Gillon found a place in New Zealand history, becoming the youngest person in the country voted on to a council.

"It was just the most hilarious campaign idea ever," she said at the time.

With a photo of the young contender in lingerie lying among blue tulle with the slogan, "The naked politician", the billboards got Gillon the votes she needed.

Once in council she achieved a lot, says North Shore councillor Julia Parfitt.

"She promoted issues that were important to her age group as well as far wider issues.

"My sons have her to thank for the excellent Nightrider bus service that operates on Friday and Saturday evenings," says Parfitt.

Gillon served one term before heading to London, taking the voice and perspective of North Shore's young adults with her.

The youngest councillor on the

North Shore City Council now is 39 – more than 20 years older than Gillon was.

But things may soon change.

Peter McArthur, election officer at the North Shore City Council, says there are more young candidates for the 2007 election than ever before.

One of them is 19-year-old Dan White who wants to fill the shoes left by Gillon.

Of his desire to be a councillor, White says: "It's the ability to change things and do something good."

But currently there is a significant absence of younger councillors across all four of Auckland's city councils.

Of the 63 councillors and four city mayors, currently only two are under the age of 35.

Manukau City Council has Auckland's youngest councillor, Jami-Lee Ross, 21, and Auckland City Council has the other – Leila Boyle, 30.

In Waitakere, it's a "sad state of affairs" for young adults, says councillor Penny Hulse, who at 48 is one of the three youngest councillors on the Waitakere City Council.

"Try as we might, we have yet

to get a younger group standing," she says.

With people aged between 15 and 34 making up almost one third of each city council's population there is reason for concern.

"Younger people have great ideas," says Dianne Hale, deputy mayor of the North Shore City Council.

She believes it is good to have young voices in council because young people look at things in a different light.

"What they perceive of wants and views of the future is different to us," Hale says.

Ross, Manukau's youngest councillor, agrees. "Getting elected does take a big time commitment. It's a big challenge."

A desire to encourage young adults on the North Shore to broaden their horizons caused Byron Marchant to set up Funksion, a social group for young adults to use their skills and knowledge to influence policy makers.

"Most of these people are young professionals very focused within their sphere.

"I want to encourage them to use their abilities to influence our city," he says.

# Waffling on and on at Last Supper



Deputy chief reporter Justin Henehan drops in on the Greens' mayoral forum.

Sitting under the Auckland Central Methodist Mission's giant crucifix, Auckland's mayoral candidates look like a strange pastiche of *The Last Supper* as they prepare to speak at the Green Party-hosted mayoral forum.

Raymond Presland, as first speaker, provides the highlight of the prepared speeches – if not for content, then definitely performance.

"We don't need university men, we need businessmen," he cries passionately from beside the lectern.

"And women!" comes the response from the audience.

Presland keeps the bluster up throughout the night and one audience member remarks: "I'm glad I don't have to live with that."

The new and improved John Banks concedes the need for public transport instead of more roads. He also takes a jab at the incumbent Mayor Dick Hubbard, saying the council's projected rates rises are simply untenable. "And now we've heard our current mayor announce further water gouges," he says.

Banks bears the brunt of most of the night's heckling – he describes the city's carbon neutrality goal as admirable but laughable, and Queen Street as the laughing stock of urban development around the world, raising the ire of both the audience and Dick Hubbard.

Downtown retailer Alex Swney's stance on rates sets him apart from the other candidates: "The things we need for a world class city are expensive. The average rates bill will not deliver the city we could be."

Lisa Prager, with her signature cowboy hat and "Vote for me" badge, says Auckland needs a "culture change, from the mayor to the city councillors".

A publicly-owned bus transport system, the abolition of Metrowater and subsidies for water tanks are all on her list of promises.

Candidate Coralie van Camp stresses the need to maintain publicly-owned assets and decries the council's "land raid" on Albert Park for the Auckland Art Gallery expansion project.

"The heart of our campaign is protecting workers," says Communist League candidate Felicity Coggan.

"I would abolish all indirect taxes that shift the burden onto people who can least afford it."

Elaine West expresses concern at water infrastructure ownership and the prospect of tolled roads running as businesses. "We are at battle with private investors," she says.

Ralph Scruff apologises that he has the flu, so can not speak for long, simply saying the mayoral salary was too much and he would donate \$100,000 to Women's Refuge and the City Mission if elected.

Former AUT University vice chancellor John Hinchcliff says we borrow the future from our grandchildren and need to put "ecology before economy."

Dick Hubbard recaps his achievements from the last term.

Steve Crow surprisingly announces transport to be the "most pressing issue" on his agenda – a view at odds with those expressed in issue 18 of *Te Waha Nui*, where he described Auckland as not "structurally suited" to public transport, which is an unattainable goal.

His response to audience questions is to proclaim his credentials: MA with honours in Business, BSC in marine biology: "So that's that covered," he says.

"So how did you get into porn?" a heckler yells.

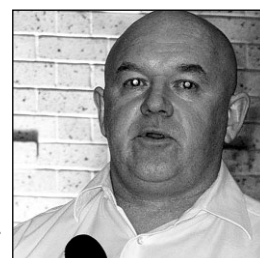
Crow is contrary, Hinchcliff answers his questions with vague and generalised concerns, Hubbard rests on his laurels while Banks tries to score points against him, Prager preaches to the converted and all the speakers talk on and on and on despite the incessant ringing of the master of ceremonies' little bell.



ALEX SWNEY



DICK HUBBARD



STEVE CROW



JOHN HINCHCLIFF



PHOTO: JOSEPH BARRATT

AFFIRMING TIES: The visit by President Calderon was the first by a Mexican president in 34 years.

# Working holiday scheme for Kiwis visiting Mexico secured

Just hours before Helen Clark flew to Sydney for APEC she was host to the President of Mexico, Felipe Calderon. It was the first official visit by a Mexican president since New Zealand established diplomatic ties 34 years ago.

After a brief meeting the two unveiled a new working holiday scheme between the two countries.

Up to 200 people aged between 18 and 30 from each country will be able to visit and work in the other per year.

President Calderon's visit raised the ire of the NZ

Latin American Solidarity Committee, who called on Helen Clark to raise the issue of human rights abuses in areas of Mexico such as Oaxaca and Chiapas.

President Calderon's mandate to govern is widely questioned at home after a recent election result saw him come to power by a narrow margin.

The election was followed by reports of corruption and voting irregularities, and a tense standoff between massive crowds in the centre of Mexico City for many weeks.

– Joseph Barratt