
Session 1 : SCENE SETTING

INTRODUCTION - Don Atkinson, Chair, LakesWater Quality Society

This symposium has three key themes starting with the bullhead catfish which our society wants to eradicate from the lakes. We recognise that is a huge task but one worth pursuing over the next few years.

The second theme is about invasive aquatic weeds, a subject of our last symposium but that was principally around Endothall and consents. Now we want a broader discussion because the lakes have been deprived of good care in the management of aquatic weeds. They have invaded our lakes with the first intrusion of lagrosiphon in the 1950's and now most of our lakes have up to 90% of their plant matter consisting of invasive weeds. We have only done window dressing by spaying around boat ramps, jetties and swimming beaches. That is like keeping the front paddock in good grass and the other thousand hectares, over the ridge and out of sight, left to revert to gorse. Aquatic plants, being mostly under water, are not widely seen but they are destructive to our native plants. Unfortunately, hornwort has taken hold over most of our lakes and it will get worse unless we are prepared to really face the problem.

The final day is focussed on the Tarawera complex of the eight lakes system. Six of these lakes are outside of Deed Funded lakes, this fund was allocated by Government, Regional and District Councils in 2006 to manage and restore Lakes Rotorua, Rotoiti, Okareka, Rotoehu and Okaro. We have had great success where money has been expended in the restoration of these lakes. But we must recognise that all lakes in the Tarawera complex are deteriorating and there is only one track laid out at the moment - continuing deterioration.

We have a good start with the Tarawera sewerage which was recently given seed funding from the Government Clean Water Fund. Congratulations to Libby Fletcher, Chair of the Tarawera Ratepayers Association, for the good work she has been doing. The farmers are also engaged but there is plenty more work needed.

We have talked a lot about the bushed areas of the catchment and the wallabies and other pests destroying the understory and enabling erosion, nothing has been done. I hope by the end of these two days we will have increased our understanding of the issues, know the science and have an idea of costs. We need the resolve, at both public and political levels, what resources need to be provided and then to commit to actions.

It takes a village to raise a child and it takes a community to restore a lake. We must attack these issues from every angle as a community and involve both regional and central government.

SESSION CHAIR – Hon Todd McClay, Member of Parliament, Rotorua

Todd is the Member of Parliament for Rotorua and also holds the portfolios of Minister of Trade, Minister for State Owned Enterprises and Associate Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Welcome to this year's LakesWater Quality Society Symposium. We will be talking about important issues, not only to Rotorua and its lakes, but to all of New Zealand. Pests as well as lake water quality are closely tied together. In 1961 some residents of Lake Rotoiti formed the Lakeweed Control Society to focus on lakeweed in their lake. In my

experience as your local MP the residents of Lake Rotoiti often come together with great passion to talk about their lake and others. In the 1960s and 70s the group was chaired by Leonard Leary with a very effective committee, and then in 2000 it was transformed into the Lakes Water Quality Society chaired by Ian McLean to deal with the wider challenges of lake water quality. The first symposium was in 2001 on research needs of the Rotorua Lakes. In 2005 John Green as chair was part of a group that collectively went to government seeking funding support and raise the importance of lake water quality in the Rotorua Lakes. I congratulate LWQS for the commitment in reaching out to the community for respectful dialogue and greater understanding of water quality issues which has delivered results. Lake Rotoiti has had the greatest improvement in lake water quality of any lake in New Zealand and can be put down to the hard work of local people and the great amount of money Steve Chadwick delivered to Rotorua as Member of Parliament.