

But You Live in the City centre – you deserve whatever happens to you

## You deserve whatever happens to you

As a resident in Auckland's City Centre there are a variety of benefits and compromises. You have an ever-changing myriad of job, entertainment, dining and shopping opportunities within walking distance. The widest variety of destinations available to you via transit (and ferry) in the whole country. The best bike lanes in the city. Theatres, movie cinemas, food from every region, from food courts to fine dining.

The downsides are expected in any city - fewer square meters for your dollar, the sounds of a bustling city day and night, light & noise pollution, an absence of bird song beyond seagulls squawking, the full spectrum of emergency sirens, drunkenness and fragile buffoons in loud vehicles of all descriptions. Some of these downsides actually contribute to the positive column - an open window to the sounds of the world around you provides a connected feeling and being part of something bigger.

But the balance tips, for the majority of the time, towards the benefits of the city for the people that choose to make it home. You accept the downsides as an acceptable trade-off for the benefits.

But there are limits.

## You must suffer any arbitrary burden I place on you

There are basic needs that all humans need - sleep being a big one.

The test I apply to any situation is "if that happened outside your house".

You would probably be unhappy if a 10x3m wide digital (i.e. illuminated) billboard was erected outside your house in St. Helliers and it illuminated your bedroom with its shifting colours and patterns (on its 8 second rotation). I can't imagine any person looking forward to such a thing - the situation clearly providing commercial gain for someone while a landlord gets paid and you, your sleep and your sanity were the true cost of the sign.

But if I tell you that it happened to me, and that I'm not pleased about it, you would simply state "but you chose to live in the city", as if that nullifies the basic needs of darkness for humans to sleep. By me choosing to live in the city, you believe that I have given up all right to any form of solitude or sleep, and having advertisements burned into my retinas is acceptable to you.

But what exactly does a digital billboard have to do with the city centre? Cities such as Vancouver ban all outdoor advertising, Amsterdam certainly doesn't have any and no one would call it lacking vibrancy or life. Why is it, in someone's head, a fact of life in the city?

And that is the crux - there is a perception that if we call it the "CBD", then it is a blank slate that exists devoid of life outside office hours, and we can do whatever we want to it, without any justification and without any consequence. This applies to personal behaviour, roadworks, construction hours, profit driven light pollution, council events and pretty much anything else, and is a mindset deeply embedded in all layers of a permissive council bureaucracy – many of whom share a deeply suburban mindset.

I suspect that this is a perception born from the emptying out of the city and the subsequent suburban mindsets. In Amsterdam, the people out on a Friday night all live there, nearby, or in a different part of town that is equally bustling. It breeds a level of respect and understanding. In Auckland, people travel from far and wide to enter a place that they appreciate and enjoy, but expect to tolerate whatever they decide it should, based on their own selfish needs and desires - things they would never do and never tolerate where they live.

## NIMBY!

Any complaint can be lazily treated as NIMBY-ism, with a quizzical expression on their face they assume that you are demanding pitch black, dead silent nights and a dead city. I was representing a residential perspective at a recent Auckland Transport run workshop on servicing the city centre (loading, deliveries, commercial activities). In the brainstorming session I suggested that noise associated with 24/7 operation (as was proposed) would need to be considered with some consideration for residents. The usual line was blurted out, assuming flat out opposition,

But You Live in the City centre – you deserve whatever happens to you

rather than considering that there are likely some simple things that can be done so minimise noise pollution: avoiding the need to (beep beep beep) reverse, smaller and/or electric vehicles, driver training etc. Instead the issue was just ignored - just a NIMBY who is preventing the city from operating well, and everyone else having fun.

Your complaints about concrete cutting starting at 10pm and going until 2am on a weeknight are responded to with details that the resource consent allows it, so stop moaning. Further questioning leads to the truth - it would be too disruptive to business or traffic FLOW to do it any other time. Yours, and the needs of thousands around you, are not relevant until you get to your workplace tomorrow, at which you are now very important.

A road that has been completely closed for months is repainted at 11pm on a Sunday so it won't interfere with traffic. "Oh, it's very quiet", except you can hear it in your level 17 apartment through double glazed windows and it's very definitely not quiet and could have been done at any time of the day because the road was already closed. You are not important.

## **Be Pragmatic**

The majority of CCMP is aspirational, 42,000 people competing with you for rent, housing

## **You are shit**

The cumulative effect is an overwhelming sense that the wider city believes you to be subhuman, not deserving of the same basic human needs that they believe that they are.

That you deserve everything that comes to you, and that anyone can do anything they like and you need to suck it up.

Because you live in an apartment and walk to work.

## **No, you are shit, actually.**

Are you sick of traffic in Auckland? Too bad, you chose to live in the suburbs so suck it up.

Does your public transport suck? Too bad, you chose to live in the suburbs so we're not going to do anything about it.

Aren't your rates too high? Too bad, you chose to live in the suburbs and that's the cost of sprawl.

Are you worried about climate change? Too bad, you chose to live in the suburbs and your carbon footprint will always be too high, even if you stop using straws.

Did someone just do burnouts for three hours in your cul-de-sac? Too bad, you chose to live in the suburbs - we're not going to do anything about it.

Is your neighbour raising and slaughtering livestock in their yard? Too bad, you chose to live in the suburbs and that's just what people do out there.

Is someone literally standing over your bed screaming in your face at 4am? Too bad, you chose to live in the suburbs and I've decided that's an ok thing to do there, because I don't live there.

Has your street been closed by a 4 day, 24 hour party that the police won't do anything about? Too bad, you chose to live in the suburbs and bored kids need something to do and it's not really harming anyone anyway.

## **Stop complaining**