

Community action makes a positive difference to public places in Māngere

If you live in Māngere Bridge, you'll know Val Payne. She's a local historian, a leader within the local Residents and Ratepayers' group and over the decades she has been part of countless church and community groups.

Val loves her community and is fiercely protective of it. When drunken behaviour started to become a real problem near the end of 2018, she knew she had to take action.

"We had these rowdy parties that happened all through the summer. They were keeping everybody along Kiwi Esplanade awake. There'd be groups of people in five or six different cars parked on the old bridge, getting drunker and drunker and throwing their empty bottles into the harbour. We were left with all their rubbish. It was an absolute mess."

The circle of harm from these excessive public drinking sessions was increasing night by night. It may just have started with the drinkers but now it included the people living nearby and the environment. Sadly, there was even a shooting. [Read the news article here.](#)

Val knew that it wasn't safe or sensible to approach the people that were drinking on the waterfront. Instead, she mobilised her community. She worked with other locals to organise a public meeting which was held on the 18 February 2019. [A news article about the meeting can be accessed here.](#)

"They turned out by the hundreds, and they filled the school hall! They were four or five deep at all the doors. It was absolutely wonderful!"

She didn't just want the locals to talk amongst themselves; she and her community were demanding action. So, she invited the policy makers, the police and the press. That night they voiced their concerns and discussed possible solutions. One idea was to extend the existing liquor ban to include all public spaces along the waterfront.

Lemauga Lydia Sosene, Chair of the Māngere-Ōtahuhu Local Board, heard her community's concerns and agreed:

"People don't want liquor in their community in a public space. While there is alcohol in the community there needs to be responsible consumption. So why do we have so many alcohol stores at local shops and on our street corners in the local community? Unfortunately, people think that it's the norm, drinking in a public place when actually it should not be. Young people ask why do liquor store owners get away with selling liquor located near the local dairy? This should not be the case: it adds anxiety of being unsafe in their local area".

However, extending the liquor ban wasn't straight forward:

"We needed to speak with Auckland Transport and Auckland Council to get an understanding of who was responsible for what and what was the legislation and policy that governed each specific area".

After numerous meetings with all the agencies involved, the liquor ban did get extended. The Police also increased patrols in the area and Val's says that things have slowly improved. "Nowadays there's the odd one or two but nowhere near the same amount".

If you're affected by people drinking in a public space, Lemauga encourages you to follow Val's example:

"Do some research, think about what you want to achieve and go and talk with your local council. Never be afraid to ask the hard questions."

Val's top tips for others learnt from this experience:

Listen: "Talk to the community that you live in. Get the feeling from them. If you realise that they are in behind you, call a meeting at the school hall."

Be Prepared: [ActionPoint](#) has a step-by-step guide to help you.

Work together: Val knew she needed the Police, Auckland Transport and the Council to make positive, lasting changes. "Invite the local mayor, invite the local council, invite the police, invite the press. We had the press and the TV and everybody! If you say you've got that, the mayor will certainly turn up!"

Don't give up! There were still some ongoing alcohol related problems going on after the liquor ban was extended. Val and her community held an additional public meeting to ensure that everyone involved continued to work on resolving these issues.