

From: [Jim Boulton](#)
To: [Adrienne Young-Cooper](#)
Subject: [ArcMail Restored] RE: Small Business Owner Speaks Up Against WSG (well almost)
Date: Tuesday, February 1, 2022 2:53:02 PM
Attachments: [image002.png](#)
[image003.jpg](#)

Fine Adrienne

Jim Boulton ONZM | Mayor |
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From: Adrienne Young-Cooper [REDACTED] >
Sent: Wednesday, 12 May 2021 2:51 pm
To: Jim Boulton <jim.boulton@qldc.govt.nz>
Cc: Colin Keel <Colin.Keel@queenstownairport.co.nz>
Subject: Re: Small Business Owner Speaks Up Against WSG (well almost)

Do you mind if I circulate this to the board Jim? I feel for the fellow who put his head up.

Success is not a destination and neither is failure.

Nga mihi
Adrienne Young-Cooper
[REDACTED]

On 12/05/2021, at 2:16 PM, Jim Boulton <jim.boulton@qldc.govt.nz> wrote:

Info

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From: [REDACTED]

Sent: Wednesday, 12 May 2021 1:09 pm

To: Ed Taylor <ed.taylor@qldc.govt.nz>; Barry Bruce <Barry.Bruce@qldc.govt.nz>; Calum MacLeod <Calum.MacLeod@qldc.govt.nz>; Jim Boulton <jim.boulton@qldc.govt.nz>; 'Wanaka Chamber of Commerce' <naomi@ignitewanaka.co.nz>; Chris Hadfield <Chris.Hadfield@qldc.govt.nz>; wanaka@paperplus.co.nz

Subject: Small Business Owner Speaks Up Against WSG (well almost)

Thought you might be interested in an interview I did with the Wanaka Sun last week. The response from the WSG is the toned down version. Based on their response I decided not to let the Sun run the interview. Yes I chickened out. The irony is the point I'm trying to make in the interview is exactly the reason I backed down. You simply get bullied into submission by the WSG and that's why there's no balance to the discussion anymore. They have missed the point completely in their haste to shut me down. The interview is not about the airport it's about them and the way they conduct themselves.

Interestingly enough I had the interview checked for any legal issues and there weren't any. Feel free to circulate in the hope it may generate some more open discussion.

Heading: Small business owner sticks his head above the parapet

Small business owner Mike Regal responded to a plea last week for community members to step forward who thought the proposed airport was "not such a bad thing."

Regal is a small business owner and says he is "sticking his head up here again" because no one else will. The question is why are there not more people speaking up in favour of narrow body jets flying into Wānaka, he said?

"The answer is simple; those in favour of jets are simply not as passionate about having the airport expanded as those opposing it. Many of us can take it or leave it. I don't feel the need to drive around town with a 'Bring on the Jets' sticker on my car," he said.

"The other reason is the Wānaka Stakeholders Group (WSG) has bullied many of us into submission. I thought twice about agreeing to this interview. People are genuinely fearful, afraid to speak up based on the shadow the WSG has cast over the town."

Regal said he had spoken to more than 20 Wānaka businesses in the last two days - key businesses that employed 100's of locals- business owners who were at the heart of the community. All were in a favour of an ongoing constructive discussion about the benefits the introduction of narrow body jets could bring.

"The common thread was their genuine fear of Michael Ross, the WSG and its supporters. I had to assure them they wouldn't be mentioned in this interview," he said.

"And it's not just businesses. I have spoken to members from both the Albert Town and Mt Barker residents associations who feel their respective associations have been hijacked by their members who support the WSG and its agenda. They too wanted to remain anonymous and were afraid to speak up."

What 's always been Regal's "biggest beef" with the WSG is that good people in the community are made to feel this way by a minority group who are well organised, well resourced, many of them independently wealthy, and relentless in the pursuit of getting their own way.

“Post a comment on the Protect Wānaka Facebook page that is contrary to their narrative and they’re on you in minutes and you’re greeted with what I would consider as a condescending or passive aggressive reply.

“However they’re only too happy to allow their supporters to post hate filled comments about the council and the Mayor. Comments posted about Jim Boulton and even his family going into the 2019 local body elections were inexcusable and while the WSG didn’t post them it was only too happy to leave them up which is just as good as condoning them.

“Even last week on the back of the airport decision there were conversation threads on their Facebook page with a supporter going as far as calling Jim Boulton a ‘prick’.”

Engaging them in any meaningful way is pointless said Regal. You’re either with them or against them.

“The WSG continues to claim it has the majority of the community behind it. Michael Ross does not have the mandate to go to the press and say this. I’m sure he thinks if he says it enough we’ll all believe him. It’s simply not true. He does not speak for me or many other good folk in our town. He speaks for himself, his group and their supporters.

“Their much touted membership of 3500 supporters is also suspect. I would guess there’s probably a hard core of 1000 at best. Many supporters signed up based on scaremongering and an exaggeration of the facts. When I questioned this in 2019 one of their core members told me ‘Sometimes you’ve got to exaggerate things to get people to take notice.’”

If the WSG does have the support they claim to, why did they only receive 170 likes and 38 comments to their post regarding the airport lease being overturned, Regal said. 30 people turned up to the ‘celebration’ rally last week. It’s hardly the revolution they would have you believe it is.

“If you look at the judicial decision that deemed the airport lease illegal, and I congratulate them on their win, it was based on a number of technicalities. The QLDC got it wrong and only have themselves to blame. Do you really think they would have signed a lease with the QAC if they didn’t think the correct process was being followed. It was a 14 million dollar deal. As the judge in the High Court ruled, there was no intent on the QLDC’s part to deceive.”

“And while the WSG may be celebrating, their victory is a hollow one, because at some stage the consultation process will most likely begin again and they’re right back to square one,” he said.

The big question going forward is how do the council and the community deal with a group that demands consultation but doesn’t want it? For the WSG and their supporters there is no alternative. It’s no jets, no compromise, he said.

“This has become much more than just a debate about an airport. This is about our community allowing itself to be bullied into submission by a well resourced, well organised minority group who won’t stop until they get their own way.”

Wānaka Stakeholders Group was invited to respond: *Mr Regal is entitled to his views, but he’s not entitled to manufacture facts, make unsubstantiated claims and or defamatory comments. What he has consistently failed to do is address the key issues that the community is concerned about, as reflected in three Quality of Life surveys commissioned by QLDC and the council’s MartinJenkins report on airports. These core issues include climate change, overtourism, infrastructure issues, protecting our environment and having a sustainable and intelligent plan for the future of our district. All of us (including*

over 600 business members of WSG) want open, transparent and lawful consultation."

