



NEWS

Get to know Councillor Byrnes



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Councillor Greg Byrnes is seventh to feature in our series which gives a behind-the-scenes look into the lives of our councillors, and why they decided to help protect our environment and communities. Keep reading to find out more about who inspired Cr Byrnes to run for Council and what motivated him to dedicate his life to the environment.

1. What element of te taiao do you get drawn to the most?

I find it hard to separate out elements as everything is connected but I am drawn to water, both freshwater and sea water.

2. What made you decide to be a councillor at Environment Canterbury, and what does a typical workday look like for you?

I must credit our previous Councillor, Green MP, ex-colleague and near neighbour, Lan Pham, who convinced me that I have something to offer. Lan is a co-conspirator in attempting to protect and reintroduce native fish species across our region's waterways. I am a fulltime Councillor, whether in the building or not, and a normal day consists of me picking up The Press and deciding if I need to contribute to the letters to the editor, coffee from Moment or the coffee container in Sydenham, and then into Tuam Street, or my regular catch-up spots. As people who know me will attest, I am a fan of conversation.



Councillor Greg Byrnes



On my Norton Commando, rocking double denim!

3. Where is your tūrangawaewae? And why?

I was born in Christchurch, Burwood Hospital to be exact and my parents rented a small bach on Marine Parade, South Brighton. Anywhere where I can stand and view Maukatere is my place to stand. Other than a decade overseas, it has been my home.

4. What was your favourite thing to do as a kid?

My Uncle Tom took me to the wrestling as a child and early teen and I remember, along with my friends, pretending to be the good guy fighting against evil. I had a pretty convincing sleeper hold as I recall.

5. What hobby or activity do you do that feeds your soul?

I have a few hobbies or interests. It is those things that make me feel connected to others and the environment, they include music, old motorcycles, I love cards and walking my trapline for the Summit Road Society. I must own up to being a huge Sci-fi fan and writer of poetry.



Trapline check with the Summit Road Society

6. What is your proudest achievement so far?

Being the parent of three amazing humans Dr Sionnain, Danno and Amelia Moread. I'm also pretty proud that they contribute across our communities in numerous ways.



With my son Daniel and family at a quiz night



With my daughters, Sionnain and Amelia

7. Describe a challenge you faced and how you overcame it.

Any challenges I have faced pale in comparison to those people in war zones, experiencing famine or brutality. So not applicable.

8. What's something you'd like to achieve or do in the next five years?

Help complete an integrated plan for Waitaha Canterbury Ki uta, ki tai, I mean it just makes sense.

9. You were the General Manager of Te Kōhaka o Tūhaitara Trust for 12 years. Tell us more about the trust, and what the rehabilitation of Tūhaitara Coastal Park means to you.

The Trust was established as an outcome of the settlement between Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu and the Crown and the return of Tūtaepatu Lagoon. The Trust has a 200 year vision to rehabilitate the coastal lands and wetlands between the Waimakariri and Ashley Rakahuri, to protect and restore freshwater and mahinga kai and uphold the mana of the wider Ngāi Tahu whānui. The pillars that support the vision are Culture, Environment, Education and Recreation. The park was gifted to the people of Aotearoa New Zealand and I feel greatly honoured to have had the role and opportunity to contribute towards that vision. I am forever emotionally attached to Tūhaitara Coastal Park.

10. You have more than 40 years' environmental experience and you've held environmental planning and policy roles in local and regional councils, and charitable trusts. What inspired you to dedicate your life to the protection and rehabilitation of the environment?

My grandfather started growing vegetables during the depression to feed his family and local community. He became so good at it that he and then my Uncle Tom had Bettaplants Nursery for around eighty years and it started my love affair with plants. Leaving school, I completed an apprenticeship in Horticulture with CCC. While most of my early career was around urban parks and spaces, life and experiences created opportunities that I was able to see and make the most of. The natural world called me and I couldn't refuse.




On a birdcount at the Ihutai Estuary





Indulging my sci-fi addiction

In case you missed the other 'Get to know' Councillor news stories

 Get to know Councillor Claire McKay

 Get to know Councillor Paul Dietsche

 Get to know Councillor Genevieve Robinson

 Get to know Councillor Ian Mackenzie

 Get to know Deputy Chair Craig Pauling