

What Makes West Auckland Great – By Seth Quinlivan-Potts from Hobsonville Point Secondary School

I tipu ake au ki Henderson, ki Te Atatū, me ki Oratia. E noho ana au ki Hobsonville.

I grew up in Henderson, Te Atatū, and Oratia. I live in Hobsonville. Having spent my entire life as a proud West Aucklander, I have been lucky enough to experience the very best of what our region has to offer, cultivating a profound love for the area I call home. My childhood was set against a backdrop of vibrant culture and beautiful scenery, something that West Auckland is renowned for.

Home to the world famous Waitākere Ranges, and rugged beaches of Piha and Muriwai, I was never deprived of outdoor adventures. Mountain biking, bush walks, and beach days were regular occurrences, while access to sailing classes was a privilege of the proximity of the Hobsonville Point marina. From age four I have played football at Fred Taylor Park for Waitākere City, now West Coast Rangers. Playing locally has reinforced my connectedness to my West Auckland community and the concept of a localised Western identity. Another enduring memory of the West Auckland community I grew up with was the weekly visits I made with my mum to the Henderson library. As I got older, I realised the importance of this space, as a hub to bring people together.

The stunning scenery of West Auckland created countless memories and deepened the connection and the affection I feel towards my home. The multicultural nature of West Auckland culture has also provided me with access to various events showcasing the interconnectedness of a diverse community. My appreciation of diversity and the importance of sharing traditions has its groundings in the events I have been to, year after year, forming part of our annual family rituals. Some examples of these include the Henderson night markets, Lunar New Year celebrations in New Lynn and Greenhithe, and Waitākere Diwali at the Trusts Arena. These events showcased the tangible connectedness present throughout West Auckland.

However, the aspect of West Auckland that truly makes it great is the people. From football teammates and coaches to teachers and classmates, the people of West Auckland are what make it so great to me. Nobody embodied this more than my bus driver at 4FUN, Pops. He was genuinely friendly, a charismatic and sociable companion to all the kids he drove, curious to truly get to know you as a person. He was exceedingly wise, always attempting to navigate schoolfriend situations that kids asked him for help with. A single dad, he knew what role models kids needed in their lives. He was the best bus driver we knew, always apologetic on the rare occasion we were late. After his passing, people poured in from all over the West to attend his funeral. I've never forgotten this memory as it highlighted the meaningful impact Pops left on everyone (something I hope to replicate), while also exemplifying the community spirit that makes West Auckland great!