

## Letter to the Editor

**8 August 2008**

It was encouraging to read the lead story on page one of The Observer on Monday August 11. At long last the voice of the wider Kapiti community is being heard, to balance out the highly emotive and constantly erroneous views of an extremely vocal minority, in terms of views held on the Kapiti airport development.

Congratulations to Chris Barber for saying publicly what many are feeling privately. While Mr Barber may be the tourism manager for Nature Coast and as such, clearly has a handle on what is needed locally to positively promote Kapiti; just as importantly, he is the face of future Kapiti. As a young professional, with a childhood spent in Kapiti, he is choosing to return here to work and live as an adult and contribute to our community.

What Kapiti desperately needs are opportunities locally, generated by business growth, for more of our young people to return as adults and make this home once more. We need to ensure we have demographic variety and balance in our community; thus ensuring a vibrant and sustainable community exists for us all.

It is interesting to note that Mr Barber has been taken to task for his comments in an internet based news article which quotes Mr Alan Tristram, media spokesperson for the Airport Coalition. Mr Tristram's comments seem to suggest that Mr Barber should not have expressed his views because of his job with Nature Coast and Council's (read, ratepayer's!) financial contribution to this organisation. I suggest to Mr Tristram that we should all fear the day when we lose the right to make comment on matters of public interest because of where or for whom we work! The right to freedom of speech is one I intend to defend, whether I agree or disagree with what is being said.

Perhaps now is the time for those in the community who can see the longterm and considerable benefits the airport development will bring, to no longer remain silent. I encourage you to share your views and ensure balance in this ongoing debate finally happens.

Wendy Huston  
Chairperson, Kapiti Chamber of Commerce