
KRIS FAAFOI



Member of Parliament for Mana Electorate

IDENTITY OF PORIRUA IN KEY WORDS

FRIENDLY- due to the people and community.

BEAUTIFUL- would be great to see this natural beauty highlighted more.

FAMILY FRIENDLY

WHO AM I AND WHAT IS MY CONNECTION TO PORIRUA

Kris has lived in Porirua for 7 years and has many members of extended family living in the city. He lives in Titahi Bay with his family and is the Labour MP for the Mana electorate. This electorate includes Porirua and the Kāpiti Coast, up to Raumati. As an MP for this area, Kris engages in advocacy for a variety of organisations in his electorate.

WHAT I LIKE OR VALUE IN PORIRUA CITY

Kris loves engaging with those around him, “there is nothing more I like, than sitting somewhere and running into people and being able to have a chat to them, people from all different backgrounds.” This is one of the things he most values in Porirua city and said despite it sounding corny “the beauty of Porirua is with the people.”

MY FAVOURITE PLACE IN PORIRUA

Kris mentioned two of his favourite places in Porirua. One of these was Titahi Bay, “we are very blessed to have a great coastline.” He also likes doing work at the Whitireia Library, where not only is it a quiet productive space, but it has a beautiful view of the harbour.

HOW THE CITY INFORMS MY PERSONAL/ WHĀNAU IDENTITY

From living in Porirua, Kris has become more aware of the inequalities within the city and he states that these inequalities have informed who he is and how he thinks.

CHALLENGES FOR PORIRUA

Kris views housing as a major issue in the Mana electorate. Despite there being a large amount of housing developments recently in Porirua, these have not been built for those that need housing most. These developments have catered to higher income home buyers. Kris believes it is “great for different types of people to come into the city, but if you do that and forget about the people who are struggling to make ends meet in the city, then you are going to get tension.” Kris is concerned about the inequalities within Porirua society and feels it is very important for all communities in Porirua to be connecting. This is why he sees the lack of roading or links for the Aotea Block to East Porirua (even though they are neighbours) as troubling. This is accompanied by the fact that schools located near the Aotea block are struggling due to how big their roles are. While schools on the other side in Porirua East have the opposite problem and do not have enough students. He wants these communities to engage and to ensure that “there are not extreme differences in how our schools look”.

Related to the inequalities previously stated, Kris believes it is important for the city centre to act as a hub. He spoke about the extremely talented and diverse communities in Porirua City but said there was no central place for them to come together. He mentioned the vegetable market which was once held in the main carpark in the city. He explained that this acted as ‘neutral territory’ where all people were able to come and engage. While this market has moved closer to those who most need access to it, Kris feels that another space like this is needed.

Kris also mentioned the housing rates in Porirua and that some residents felt that there rates were too high in comparison to other rates in the Wellington region. He explained this was a result of insufficient revenue raising assets in Porirua City itself and that the city was reliant on rates for its maintenance and development. He mentioned that there are a number of important upgrades that need to occur to Porirua’s infrastructure to ensure the city continues to function such as maintenance on the city’s plumbing system. He believed that Porirua City should be able to access regional development funding in order to aid its development as reliance on rates acts as a significant challenge for the city.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PORIRUA

Kris sees a lot of opportunities for Porirua City and believes that it is “on the verge of realising a lot of that”. He attributes these changing times to active multicultural communities, vocal youth engaging in the city and he also believes that the Ngāti Toa settlement allows them to “be a powerhouse in the development of Porirua and the wider region” should they choose.

As mentioned above, Kris is interested in connection and the “relatively random interactions” that come with living in a community. He sees a central area or hub in the city as an important opportunity to foster this engagement across communities. He envisions a space where independent of anybody’s means, they are able to occupy a space in the city. He imagines “something that is a bit open and transparent so when you arrive then you know what is on the menu” or on offer in the city. While Kris was quick to acknowledge that elements of the city centre had been redeveloped and things had been done, he believed a large scale strategy was needed rather than developing elements within these spaces. “The city itself needs some very strong leadership to give the geographical city a bit more of a heart”. Kris acknowledged Pātaka as a form of hub, closest to what he imagines, but said that the design of the building doesn’t foster a long stay. He believes there is real opportunity in the redevelopment of the city centre.

Kris also cited the fact that Porirua is the “youngest city in the country”. This trend is continuing to increase as young families are moving to Porirua from Wellington due to cheaper housing options. He believes this creates an opportunity for businesses to change and adapt to suit this young population. An example might be the reorientation of the RSA in Titahi Bay. He noted that suburbs such as Whitby have begun to develop elements which were previously only available in Wellington such as access to craft beer and high quality restaurants. These elements help to create a sense of community within the suburbs themselves.

Kris mentioned the opportunities available surrounding Ngāti Toa history and particularly the story behind the haka. However he was explicit in stating that this was a part of Ngāti Toa identity and any efforts to essentially commercialise this, would need to be under Ngāti Toa leadership. He felt that due to Porirua’s location and the amount of visitors arriving into Wellington provided an opportunity for them to receive tourists and visitors into Porirua City.

As mentioned in the challenges section, affordable housing is a major issue in Porirua. Kris stated that this is a central government issue and he saw opportunities to further develop state houses in Porirua City. Kris believes that state housing should be developed to be social housing, where a sense of community is fostered. He said that often the people moving into state houses are in need of the most support, and if houses were designed in a way to foster communities, this could help the community members look out for one another. He also believed this design could provide an opportunity to administer social services to these social houses in the form of community.

Finally, Kris feels that the current use of the harbour represents a missed opportunity. “You know we’ve got loading bays for big box retailers looking out at the beautiful harbour.” He believes this is an opportunity to learn from and change when the time allows.

HOW TO MAKE THESE OPPORTUNITIES HAPPEN

Kris considers brave leadership to be needed in order to achieve the many opportunities he highlighted. He believes that the Porirua City Council should have access to some regional development money to “get underway with the CBD and bring some people and a bit more heart to the city centre.” This leadership must also come from other people and organisations in the community. Kris also thinks that some government departments should be sent to Porirua, to increase Porirua’s capacity while also spreading the risk in the case of a natural disaster.

WHAT SHOULD COMPETITION ENTRANTS KEEP IN MIND?

Kris once again reiterated the natural beauty of Porirua, before repeating the need for a central community space. He imagines a flexible space which allows for “a whole lot of different things to happen in that space.” He believes that “revitalizing the city centre will send a pretty different message to the rest of the country about what Porirua actually is.”

