

EATING BIG FISH

By Linda Blincko, Creative Director, Depot Artspace

In the giant ocean small fish swim more safely in schools. There is no desire amongst them to draw attention to their presence as personalities; it would more than likely mean danger, the possibility of being picked off by creatures larger and more predisposed to mischief.

Better to live in a less self-interested manner; in making sure that survival for everyone, not just a privileged few, is easy. Standing out is not an issue for small fish. They are much more effective collectively and also able to take care of one another. Small fish swim together no matter what the tide or temperature and can eventually dine on bigger unsuspecting entities for whom tiddlers appear to offer no particular threat. Complacency is often the Achilles heel of the Big Fish phenomenon.

If we apply this oceanic analogy to the Supercity we see that small fish face an even bigger adversary in the form of Auckland's multi-million dollar mega-bureaucracy, swimming in a sea it wants to reduce to a fish tank in order to accommodate its bloated toy boats for the America's Cup. Small fish are left gasping on the periphery as their own sources of survival shrink.

Council-owned community facilities are being sold off in the name of 'rationalising assets', such as Devonport's I Site, formerly its Borough Council building, and Manukau's Service Centre. Some people may say that no amount of community action will save them but this has all too often become an excuse for apathy and inertia.

Now, here's a fantastic example of the passion and persistence of 'small fish' paying off, and we can even stick with the oceanic analogy!

After their decades-long campaign let's celebrate with the Greens their triumph as expressed by Green Party Co-leader James Shaw. (12.4.18)

"Today our government has announced the historic decision to end all new fossil fuel exploration in our oceans.

Ending deep sea oil and gas exploration has long been a key goal of the Green Party and today, in Government, we've delivered it.

Without question it is our biggest victory yet. We've stopped the rigs.



This nuclear free moment of ending the environmentally dangerous and planet threatening search for new oil and gas in our pristine waters has come about because of you and generations of New Zealanders calling for a clean energy future.

This campaign started decades ago. As a teenager I took part in a blockade of Mobil Oil calling for the end to oil exploration. And in 2011 I joined thousands of others on the beach at Tauranga to help clean up in the wake of the Rena oil disaster. Like so many Green members and supporters the campaign to stop oil exploration has been core to why I'm involved in politics.



Painting by Karen Browne as part of 'No Drill, No Spill' exhibition at No.1 Gallery, Rawene

And we really should all take pride in today's historic win.

The Green Party has thrown everything (bar the kitchen sink) at achieving this goal. We worked with artists and painted giant murals, marched in the streets, tendered for the oil blocks to protect our oceans from the oil companies and I even donned a wetsuit to launch a policy underwater following the Rena oil spill. We uncovered scandals in Taranaki like the spreading of fracking waste on farm land and the National Government's plans to drill for oil in the endangered Maui dolphin sanctuary.

For decades Greens have shone a spotlight on the perils of oil drilling and its threat to our very existence. And today we have won.

Our beaches, our whales, our Maui's dolphins are safer from the danger of a Deep Water Horizon type catastrophe because of the decision our Government has made today.

Some people will not be happy about this decision. The oil companies are sure to protest loudly and have deep pockets and loud voice to drown out the call of the environment. At the same time as this, the Government has started transition planning and support for the works. So we need your help to get the positive message about protecting our climate out to as many people as possible."

In his definitive work, *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (Community and Society), written in 1882, Ferdinand Tonnies distinguished between two social groupings, where community was based on "feelings of togetherness and on mutual bonds, which are felt as a goal to be kept up." Adversity often galvanises groups and the essence of community is more likely to be embodied by them.

Small fish therefore have a powerful place, as long as they remain united. If we value and cherish our environment and its inhabitants of all species we need to think as small fish whose concern, as a part of a whole, is for the well being of the whole.



Anti-nuclear protest on Maungauika North Head, 1980s