

## NEWS

# Beachfront owners up in arms over erosion claim

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KAPITI

KAPITI beachfront property owners feel "blitzkrieged" by the council's coastal erosion report that has devalued their properties, and are prepared to go to court as a last resort.

The *Coastal Erosion Hazard Risk* report, published last week, detailed the predicted risk to all beachfront properties between Paekakariki and Otaki. The data will be included in future land information memorandums (LIMS), and could affect the insurance and property values of the homes.

Anthropologist Salima Munro, a resident of Paraparaumu's beachfront Manly St, said there was "a lot of discontent" among people whose homes were affected by the latest shoreline predictions.

Experts such as engineers, architects and barristers were coming together to work on seeking remedy through the courts, she said.

One of her neighbours had been planning to sell up and move into a retirement home, but had had to abandon those plans.

Lawyer Christopher Ruthe, also of Manly St, said groups of residents were desperately trying to avoid litigation by attending council meetings this month.

"I question the competency of the council which relies on a report where the science is seriously questioned," he said.

He attended a council meeting last week and put up a series of questions to the report writer.

"The councillors did not answer. The answers were given by a staff member who had the apparent ability within a few minutes to understand all the questions and give the answers.

"I wonder if the council conducts its meetings according to the principles of voodooism, where apparently information is shared telepathically"

cordance with best practice, as understood by any competent academic", he said.

Mrs Munro, who carries out peer reviews for international organisations, said the council's peer assessment did not validate the information in the report.

"We have had no chance to prove we were not flood-prone. The council's actions go completely against an open and democratic process.

"We have been blitzkrieged. There is no proper peer review to validate the report.

"False information has gone onto our LIM reports. We could call for a judicial review and file a lawsuit for the value we have lost.

"A lot of people planning to put their houses on the market are now too scared – you are looking at millions of dollars of people's values.

"People put their lives into their houses. You might as well spend another \$60,000 and get a decent peer review."

Council sustainable development manager Jim Ebenhoh said the reports had been peer-reviewed by both a mathematician and a Massey University coastal geomorphologist, with further reviews conducted by experts.

The council was "confident that the data has been appropriately peer-reviewed and would stand up to any legal challenge".

The council was legally required to conduct the coastal hazard assessment and put the information straight into LIM reports under the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act, Mr Ebenhoh said.

"If council had held this information and did not put it on LIMs, it would be open to legal challenge from any purchaser who bought a property that council knew to be subject to coastal erosion."

Mr Ebenhoh said residents were welcome to pursue "any action they wish" including site assessments at