

From: ccarey@earthlight.co.nz
 Subject:
 Date: Tue, August 10, 2021 3:46 pm
 To:

Claire Carey 18/8/22

Here it is Karthic!

Introduction from Claire Carey

Background

This was sent to Karthic who at the time was doing a podcast series "Tune into Nature with Karthic" through Otago University Science Communication Centre. He was preparing one on Aramoana & subsequently broadcast. This information in the email was background research for him and he did use some voice recording from me.

In December 1979 the Save Aramoana Campaign was formed in Dunedin, NZ, to defeat the possibility of an aluminium smelter there. It was inherently understood by some in its ranks that the campaign should not stop at that point. Several different ideas for industry there had already been floated unsuccessfully. The overarching objective of the Save Aramoana Campaign became securing reserve status for Aramoana.

This finally happened nearly twenty years later.

In 1998 the area was gazetted as an "ecological area" under the 1977 Reserves Act, which afforded it status as an area of national scientific and national importance, similar to a national park.

My role in the Save Aramoana Campaign

By the time the SAC was set up I had lived at Te Ngaru for several years and planned to stay. Although brought up in the Port Chalmers area, I had worked in places other than Dunedin, and then travelled overseas. As often happens when we have experienced other places, in coming home, we see things freshly. We see the beauty and why certain things should be preserved, perhaps. I had reached that conclusion over Aramoana by the end of 1979.

My first action was in December 1979. With the help of Gordon Johnston who was longtime secretary of the Aramoana League, I got permission from the League to set up a display in the local hall on the environmental attributes of the area. At the League's AGM in early January Aramoana residents resolved to declare Aramoana a wildlife reserve. To have the community on board was very helpful.

I was an enthusiastic and committed member of the campaign, attending the weekly meetings. It's rapidly expanding support base attracted wonderful people with very special talents. I was just "one of the troops."

At the end of that year, Aramoana was chosen as the preferred site for the smelter proposal. After that my role became more prominent.

In March 1981 I was flown to Auckland to work as an ambassador on the travelling embassy of the independent state of Aramoana. My work, along with Alistair Graham, (mainly,) from the Coalition for Open Government, was in NZ's North Island. Coincidentally though, when a prominent partner for South Pacific Aluminium withdrew in October, 1981 I was, (along with Allan Cumming, very prominent in all the non-violent action planning,) at work that day. We were in Alexandra, an inland town in NZ's South Island.

After that withdrawal, the full-on days of the SAC were over, but another course of action was needed. Several different groups closely associated with SAC, appealed the Planning Tribunal's decision for industrial zoning at Aramoana. It was

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overturned in June 1983. I was part of the court case, presenting some of the evidence for the Aramoana League.

Later on, what was needed within the SAC was a small group keeping a watching brief to ensure the momentum gained, carried on towards the declared reserve status objective.

I was part of that small group that probably disbanded, well.... I really don't know quite when. I do know things were never conclusive, but in 1989 when a proposal for a nickel smelter surfaced, it was not taken particularly seriously by anyone and quietly died. There were other smaller threats and I did submissions etc on them when needed, but with the zoning overturned, and then changes in local government in 1989, my focus changed. For quite a while I publicly asked questions through the city's daily newspaper, in the "Letters to the Editor" column of what was now Port Otago Ltd, related to the granting and enforcing of resource consents meant to be carried out by the Dunedin City Council. Things were further clouded by the Otago Regional Council being the 99% shareholder on behalf of Otago citizens, of Port Otago Ltd.

So in essence my role most significantly was one of long term commitment, manifest where needed, and mostly behind the scenes, but prominent occasionally over that nearly twenty year time-span.

Advice the answer to Question No 5

Never, ever give up on the power of goodness!



* Karthic was also based at the Natural History Unit at the time.

CONSENT FORM FOR INTERVIEWS

I authorize to to use my interviews, photographs & videos (if applicable) in a podcast series titled "Tune into Nature with Karthic" (working title) (including all versions and adaptations of it) and in the promotion of the programme on all media platforms.

I understand what this project is about. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I understand that:

1. I can ask for further clarification at any time from Karthic SS or Nancy Longnecker.
2. My interview will be recorded, and parts of the recording will be used in the podcast that will be made publicly available. In the first instance, the podcast will be broadcast on Otago Access Radio, 105.4 FM. It will also be available online.
3. A report will be written about this project for the funding body (Otago Regional Council). Direct quotes from my interview may be used in reporting about the project.
4. Some aspects about this project may be published and will be available in the University of Otago Library (Dunedin, New Zealand).

I agree to take part in this project. I give permission for:

- my interview to be recorded and used in creation and broadcast of the podcast, and
- quotes from my interview to be used in reporting about the project.

Claire Carey

(Signature of participant)

31/7/21

(Date)

CLAIRE CAREY

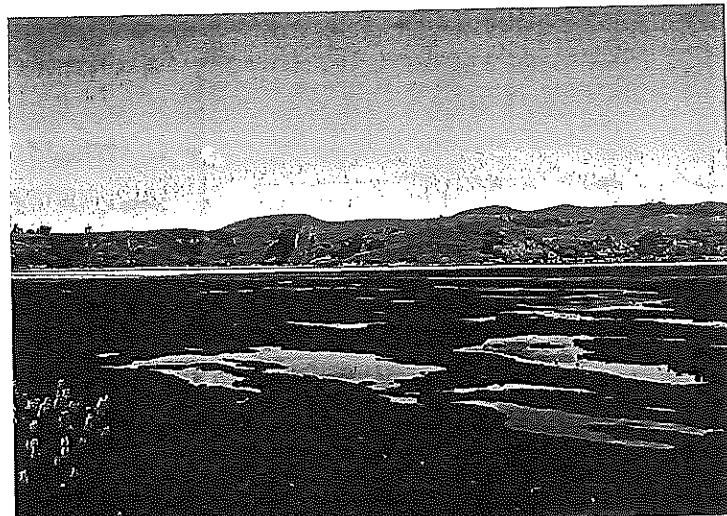
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SAVE ARAMOANA CAMPAIGN

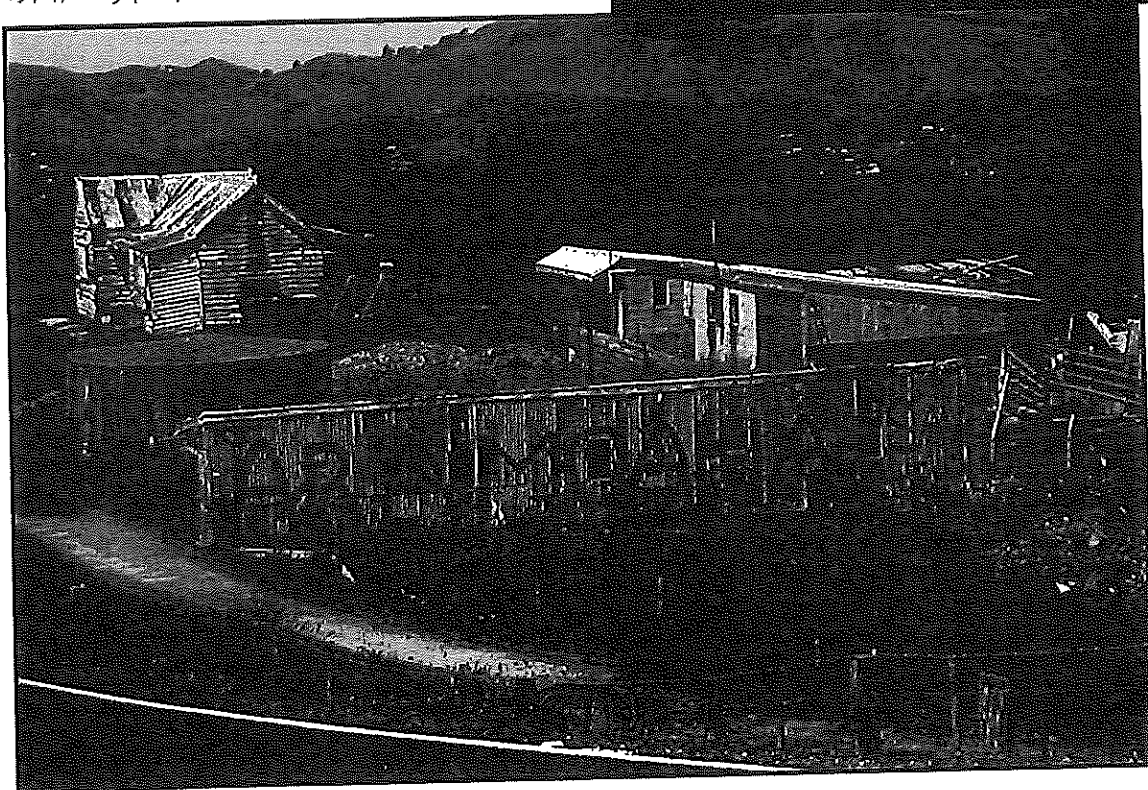
“The beautiful Aramoana has been rescued from the smelter of Think Big and we are now putting it in the right hands. Today's decision is the last step in a story of how a community took on the government and won.” Peter Dunne, Associate Minister for the Environment.¹⁵²

Aramoana is a small coastal settlement, 27 kilometres north of Dunedin. Its name means “pathway of the sea” and the area includes marshlands (wetlands) considered to be “biologically significant”, as a vital habitat for wading birds and as the most extensive (and least altered) saltmarsh in Otago. As well as providing a home to 80 species of moths, the birds commonly found in Aramoana saltmarsh include eastern bar-tailed godwits, South Island pied oystercatchers, pied stilts, spur-winged plovers, banded dotterels, white-faced herons, and various species of ducks and gulls.¹⁵³

After the smelter opened at Tiwai Point in Bluff in 1971, Otago business interests fancied a similar project for land owned by the Otago Harbour Board at Aramoana. In 1974, they proposed that the site be turned

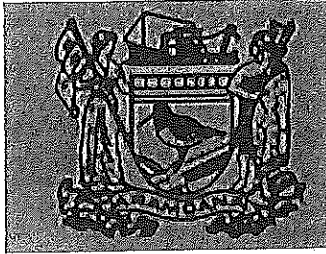


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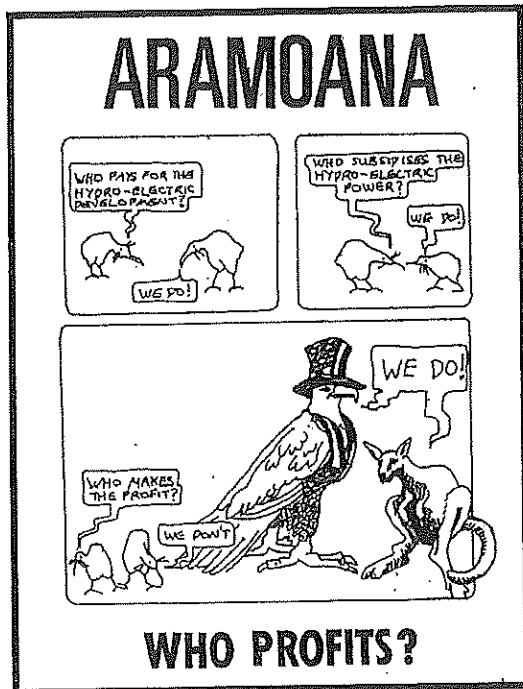
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Official flag of the
Independent State
of Aramoana.



into another major aluminium smelter by a consortium (partnership) of three companies: Aotearoa-based Fletcher Challenge, Australia's CSR Limited and Swiss firm Alusuisse.¹⁵⁴ This proposal was withdrawn after several public meetings and protests revealed how poorly it was planned, helped along by a change of government. But those who'd joined together to oppose the development were now on alert. When surveyors were spotted on the land over the summer of 1979–80, activists were ready, uniting under the banner of the Save Aramoana Campaign (SAC). They were determined to stop the smelter and protect the saltmarsh by having it named a reserve.¹⁵⁵

At the time, the land sat within the Waikouaiti District Scheme and had zoning conditions the group believed were illegal. The SAC took the District Council to court and asked for a ruling on the zoning. Once the case was accepted, no work could take place on the site until a judgment was made.



Now they'd committed to this battle, the SAC took their campaign to the public, quickly followed by industry putting out press releases, keen to argue their side. On 2 April 1980, the SAC held its first public meeting at the Regent Theatre in Dunedin and around 1000 people attended. Later that month, they set up the first non-Dunedin branch of the SAC in Christchurch, and later held a hui at Ōtākou Marae, opposite Aramoana, to discuss the smelter. The consortium was invited but didn't attend, though they did visit shortly afterwards and met with worried residents and other concerned groups, including the SAC. One local resident said afterwards she and her neighbours were hit hard as they realised how serious the threat was to their homes and community. That December, the Wellington City Art Gallery hosted Aramoana: Tapu Land, an exhibition by Otago artists and others protesting against a

smelter at Aramoana.¹⁵⁶ Word was spreading.

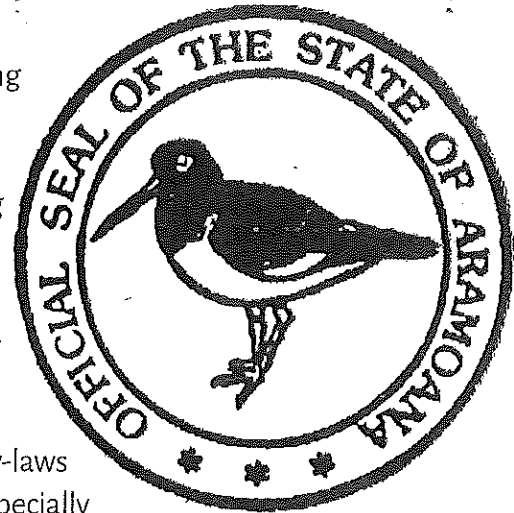
December 1980 brought the official announcement that Aramoana had been chosen as the site for the smelter. The plan called for the destruction of the villages of Aramoana and Te Ngaru, as well as the saltmarsh. The SAC was ready and sprang into action. The next day a march took place from Logan Park to Aramoana, where opponents held a rally. They declared the area the "Independent State of Aramoana", complete with its own flag. A border post was set up at Otafelo Point and manned for 48 hours, and every weekend until mid-February 1981. People were issued with passports and granted citizenship. A set of collector's stamps were issued, with original artwork donated by leading Kiwi artists. They raised the equivalent of nearly NZ\$500,000 today.

The money and publicity created helped build a national campaign that attracted support from artists like Ralph Hotere, as well as conservationists and heritage researchers. Many Otago artists, writers and performers contributed to the successful campaign to save Aramoana. This was campaigning at its most creative—engaging hearts and minds. Other people around the country, who were concerned about rising electricity prices, got together in 1980 under the Campaign Power Poll banner to oppose the smelter plans too.¹⁵⁷ The campaign even had an international component—activists wrote to the international companies listed as possible smelter partners and advised them that, if they got involved, they would face persistent and well-organised non-violent direct action against their business interests.

Meanwhile, residents' worst fears were confirmed when they were hand-delivered letters to tell them their leases were being terminated (all the houses were built on land leased by the Otago Harbour Board, not privately owned by the occupiers). They were given the option of compensation (money) or resettlement at Long Beach.

The government, eager to keep the smelter project moving, passed the National Development Act, thinking another smelter would justify building the Clyde Dam (part of its Think Big programme at the time). Two district councils merged so they could rewrite the by-laws in a way that would be more sympathetic to industrial land use (especially regarding a smelter at Aramoana). These slippery provisions were fought by the SAC at both council and Planning Tribunal levels—and they won the case! The court directed that “all reference to industrial development at Aramoana is to be deleted”.

Because the campaign was so highly visible and successful, the government couldn't risk losing votes by forcing anything through, as it had with the Clyde Dam. The tide had turned against Think Big and, to the protesters' delight, the smelter proposal disappeared without trace. The village of Aramoana was legally divided into freehold titles, allowing the residents to own the land beneath their houses.¹⁵⁸ Today, Aramoana saltmarsh is a reserve, recognised as an area of national significance.¹⁵⁹



“WE HAVE ACHIEVED EVERYTHING WE SET OUT TO DO,” A SAC SPOKESPERSON SAID, ADDING, “THE DECISION EXCEEDED OUR WILDEST DREAMS.” ³²⁸

