

Youth centre as an OCA project

Outgoing OCA secretary John Ross feels a youth centre for Onerahi is something the association should be investigating.

Having been involved in youth leadership roles for most of his life, John sent a questionnaire to five Onerahi people on the issue, on behalf of the association. The five were Isopo Samu, Sally Wilson, Paul Doherty, Spence Penney and Sue Baker. The intention was to hold a 'Youth Summit', preceded by a hui for the area's teens. The plans fell through when John landed up in hospital in Auckland with a broken leg at the end of February.

"I've been talking to the young people too, and their main comment is that they don't feel a part of the Onerahi community," says John. "I've only been here 14 months, but it seems to me that while the rest of the community – older people in particular – are well catered for in Onerahi, the kids have missed out. The last thing anyone did for them was build the skateboard in Sherwood Park – and that, as I understand it, was 14 years ago."

So John is going to raise the issue on a personal basis at the AGM, and is hoping some young people might go along to support his ideas.

Following his experiences in Snells Beach, he sees no reason why the Onerahi Youth Centre can't be provided at minimum cost, provide job training for local youngsters, and help bridge the gap between local retired tradesmen and local youth.

"When I spoke to some of the kids at the shopping centre late one night recently I asked them how they felt about living in Onerahi," he said. "Predictably, they said it was boring – but when I asked them what they wanted, one of them said 'Somewhere we can call our own.'"

"A youth centre is one very obvious way of providing that."