

Homeowners must confront climate extremes - Walden

Islanders will look back at 2017 as the year when climate change arrived "in real time", local board chairman Paul Walden says.

The lesson is that locals need to take responsibility for coping with increased deluges and more dry spells - from addressing private drainage issues to storing more water.

"The weather patterns that we've experienced this year have been those that climate scientists have been warning about for some time," Mr Walden says.

"[In March and April] we experienced extremely heavy rainfall and severe flooding and as a community we rallied to support each other.

“ In plain terms every house should have at least two large water tanks - Paul Walden ”

"We do so again now as we are experiencing water scarcity.

"We must wake up and learn from this. Property owners and developers need to take responsibility to ensure they are providing adequate storage for water."

Mr Walden says scientists have been warning that weather such as this year's will become the norm - "such as when we receive our annual rainfall in one hit".

Homeowners need to ensure they have capacity to store the increased volume of rainwater to cope with more droughts.



Watering gardens is currently a low priority for most home owners with limited water reserves.

"Auckland University has been telling us for some time now that if we are to increase the volume of household storage the scarcity issues we experience in dry summers will be largely resolved.

"In plain terms every house should have at least two large water tanks."

Regarding flooding issues, Mr Walden says the modern catchphrase in stormwater management is "water sensitive low impact design - which means replicating nature.

"This is one area where Waiheke is far enough behind to be ahead.

"The irony is that the significant flooding events that we experienced earlier this year, without exception, were the result of poorly designed man-made infrastructure."

He welcomes the "holistic" approach that Auckland Council's Heathy Waters [stormwater] department is bringing to

stormwater management since taking responsibilities from Auckland Transport in urban areas.

"The real challenge, however, will be to ensure that they maintain the principle of working with nature and that they recognise the sensitivities of working within the marine environment around the island.

"Interventions designed to address flooding impacts on private property must also be designed to protect our receiving waters.

"We do not want solutions that in 50 years' time leave the island's bays and waters of the gulf in a similar state of environmental degradation to what has become the norm in the waters surrounding urban Auckland.

"Stormwater engineers are very good at getting water out to sea without really thinking what it looks like."

• Geoff Cumming

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