

Project-based learning: Local body elections

Richard Walker

Charles Riddle

The project

The project involved eighteen Wintec journalism students reporting on the local body elections in the second half of 2013.

Students reported on the Hamilton City Council election campaign with a neighbourhood focus. The intention of such reporting from the ground up was to find and set an agenda that takes control away from the politicians themselves. Stories were for publication on student news website the Waikato Independent (www.waikatoindependent.co.nz).

The students had five assessments as part of the project during September and October. The first of these was to interview a voter and find out the issues that concerned them. That was then to be followed up by taking the voter's concerns to at least two candidates for a response. Finally, the student was to return to their original voter after the voting, to find out what they had made of the election. The two other assessments were a report on a mayoral candidate meeting held by the Waikato Times, and a story based on social media used during the election campaign.

Waikato Independent homepage during election campaign

[Election 2013: Our voters](#)

[Election 2013: What the candidates say](#)

[Study with us](#)

Search



Election 2013: Meet our voters ... and find out what they really want



Students cover grassroots issues in campaign

by [Editors](#) on September 3, 2013 [[Edit](#)]

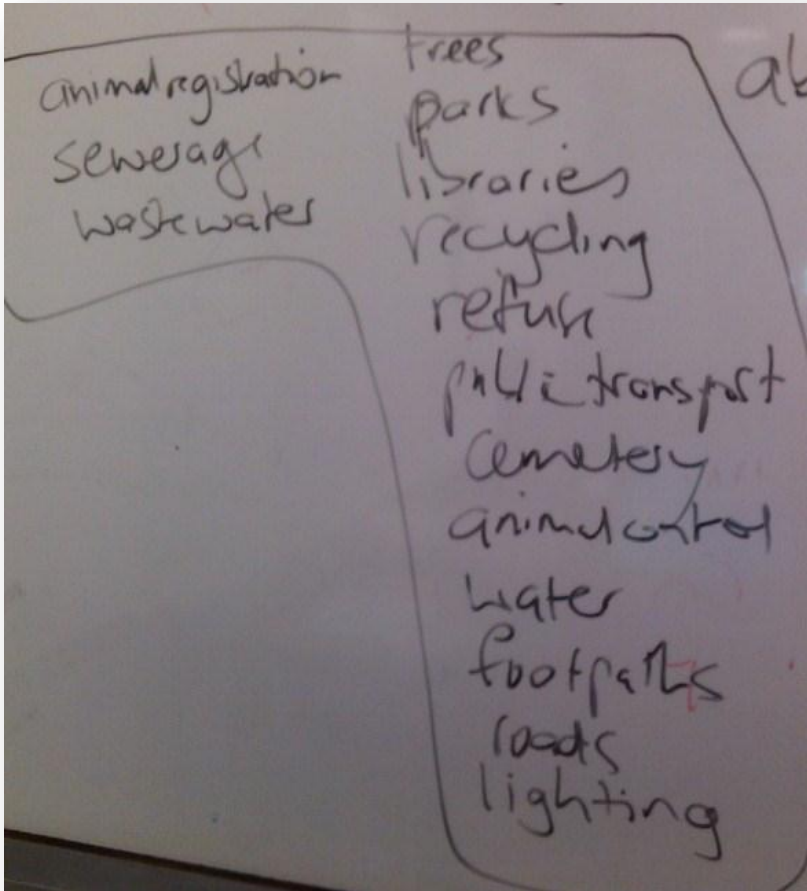
In an alternative approach, Waikato Independent reporters are tackling the Hamilton council elections from the bottom up. We are fanning out across the city to talk to voters about their neighbourhood concerns. Our reporters will then take these concerns to candidates in the coming weeks.

Election 2013

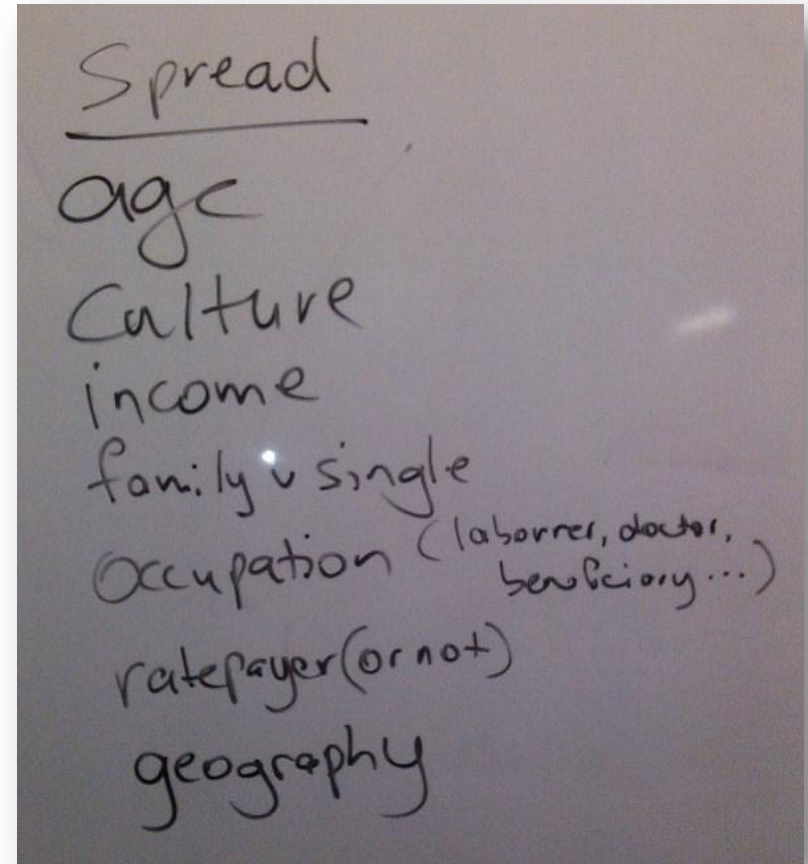


Student brainstorming in classroom

Council services



Range of interview subjects



Map showing geographic spread of students (white pins) and of interview subjects (red pins)



Waikato Independent voter stories

<http://www.waikatoindependent.co.nz/category/election-2013-our-people/>



Young Glenview family asks for playgrounds

on September 2, 2013 by Caitlin Wallace

Samantha and Ryath Stockdale have settled into Glenview but wish there were nearby playgrounds to take their daughter to and get to know the community.



Community centres and parks please

on September 2, 2013 by Olivia Johnstone

Rototuna resident Matthew Perry wants to see less commercial buildings, and more community centres in the north of Hamilton City.



Student driven crazy by recycling rules

on August 29, 2013 by Kelsey Wilkie

Students can find recycling rules confusing, and have no idea about councillors or council operations, says student Kathryn van der Maas



More green, more birds, more trees – June Crew

on August 27, 2013 by Libby Wilson

A retired Huntington resident has a few suggestions for the incoming council. They involve trees, vagrants, and a new development.



Council candidates should get into community – youth worker

on August 27, 2013 by Libby Wilson

Get out to the suburbs and get your hands dirty. That's a youth worker's message to Hamilton City Council candidates.



Cycle lanes, a living wage, and fewer alcohol outlets

on August 27, 2013 by Libby Wilson

Jamie Toko has spent her life in Hamilton City Council's West Ward, and she wants to make a difference there by becoming a councillor.



Macpherson aims to stop vital asset sales

on August 26, 2013 by Libby Wilson

Mayoral candidate Dave Macpherson wants Hamilton to keep hold of its community assets, especially pensioner housing.

Waikato Independent video story on mayoral election

<http://www.waikatoindependent.co.nz/2013/09/mayoral-candidates-some-speak-some-sing/15884/>



Student feedback on election project

- Worked well in making us take photos and video
- Covering the elections made us understand them and council much more – actually was quite interesting!
- Developed use of social media
- Used a wide range of skills for each of the stories eg: using social media, interviewing, council candidates
- Struggled to convince people to go on video – possibly need guidance on how to convince people to do this for us.