



# Case study

Waitematā Table Tennis Club



Artist impression of Waitematā Table Tennis Club

## A new home for the Waitematā Table Tennis Club

In 2012, long-time Tāmaki Makaurau table tennis volunteer Andrew Palmer moved to Waitematā Table Tennis Club. Little did he know that this move would be the start of a journey that would result in a much-needed facility for our region.

After five years of planning and construction, the Waitematā Table Tennis Stadium re-opened its doors in Sunnyvale in December 2021, leading to an almost-immediate rise in the number of players using the facility.

The replacement stadium is a far cry from the one Andrew inherited.

“We had a small, volunteer-built, 1970s facility, which didn’t have enough tables,” he recalls. “The building was falling down and was

full of asbestos. We couldn’t play while it was raining because the water just came straight through the ceiling.”

Previous efforts by the club to build a new stadium hadn’t been successful, with what Andrew describes as “gold standard” building plans drawn up 15 years ago costing at \$4-5 million, which “would be \$10 million at present.”

Andrew set about assembling a team and securing funding for a scaled-down but fit-for-purpose facility.

“We figured you couldn’t [build a stadium] by committee, so we had a team of three – the key being Simon Fenwick, a Christchurch-based player with design and construction skills.

### Waitematā Table Tennis Stadium

- Completed in 2021 following a five-year process
- Auckland Council funding - \$780,000; total funding - \$1.9m
- Waitemata Table Tennis Club can now cater for 10 times the participants it could in its last stadium, while member numbers have risen 200%
- “[Other grant funders] wouldn’t give us money unless they thought the project would be successful, and Council’s support provided some validation of this” – Andrew Palmer, President, Waitematā Table Tennis Club



**LEFT:** A school tournament in the old stadium, with water damage on the floor. **RIGHT:** The opening ceremony for the new facility, with the building project team (from left - Andrew Palmer, Simon Fenwick, Nick Harris - Auckland Council, Craig Dye) being presented with an award from Alfred Dela-Pena (Head Coach, right) for the building project.

“We pared back the design to the bare basics of what we needed, to make it fit what funding we [thought was] possible, which was around \$2 million.”

### The funding journey

Funding emerged as a significant hurdle early on. The catch-22 of requiring funding to carry out the feasibility work to show the project was worthy of grant funding required some careful management, “and a bit of luck,” says Andrew.

The journey was far from smooth, and was compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic which resulted in a number of funding avenues available to the club being removed.

But with Auckland Council – which provided \$780,000 of funding for the \$1.9 million total project cost in two stages through Auckland Council’s Sport and Recreation Facilities Investment Fund – getting behind the project, other grant funders soon came on board.

“Once we had Auckland Council’s funding and help in navigating the planning process, we got other grant funders on board. They wouldn’t

give us money unless they thought the project would be successful, and Council’s support provided some validation of this” says Andrew.

### From strength to strength

The Waitemata Table Tennis Stadium, which is twice the size of the old venue, opened in late 2021. With wheelchair access, a new kitchen, toilets, top-quality lighting and a new digital membership system which allows members to access the facility after hours, participation has surged.

According to Andrew, club membership has risen from 100 to 300 members, with the stadium also being able to accommodate school and para tournaments, high performance athletes, and casual players too.

“We almost couldn’t run tournaments in the old stadium because we wouldn’t know if it was raining that day!” says Andrew. “There were only five tables, so we would lose [players that couldn’t get a court].

“Now we don’t have that problem... with the (increased) size, even if we’re running a club session people can still come in and use the other tables

and do some high-performance training and coaching. We’ve got a couple of world-ranked players that can train all the time which they couldn’t before because we were shut.

Andrew says the support the Waitemata Table Tennis Club received through Auckland Council’s Sport and Recreation Facilities Investment Fund was vital to deliver a quality recreation facility for Aucklanders at a time when they’re experiencing increasing demand.

He believes that greater investment in Auckland Council’s Sport and Recreation Facilities Investment Fund could allow other sporting and recreation organisations to develop facilities which will meet this demand, providing much-needed support to get more facilities like the Waitemata Table Tennis Stadium built and in use.

“[Telling other grant funders] that ‘the Council has already approved this’ was the key thing we needed... that got them on board, because they wouldn’t give us money unless they thought the project would be successful – and Council’s support gave them confidence it would.”