

**BEFORE THE HEARING COMMISSIONERS.
AT CENTRAL OTAGO**

IN THE MATTER of the Resource Management Act 1991 ("the
Act")

AND

IN THE MATTER of the Proposed Plan Change 13 to the
Central Otago District Plan

**STATEMENT BY CARL MULLER
FOR HORTICULTURE NEW ZEALAND
2 JULY 2019**

- 4.2 The land in questions is located within the rural area adjacent to existing horticulture operations.
- 4.3 A change from rural to urban zoning will have an impact on the existing horticulture operations.

5. REVERSE SENSITIVITY ISSUES IN KERIKERI AND RELEVANCE TO PC13

- 5.1 As mentioned above, I directly managed the neighbour notification and spray coordination activities for 19 orchards that cover 90ha of land at Kerikeri. These orchards range from somewhat isolated to within urban areas.
- 5.2 The number of neighbours that require notification range from 4 to 17 for each orchard. The total number of neighbours I communicate with is in the order of 130.
- 5.3 Spraying takes place year-round with each orchard being sprayed between 15 and 27 times depending on the orchard requirement.
- 5.4 Prior to spraying, I email each orchard's neighbours with details of timing and chemicals to be used. My full contact details are on the bottom of my notification emails.
- 5.5 I prepare a spray sheet for the spray operator with blocks to be sprayed, and the telephone numbers of neighbours who wish to be contacted on the day either in person or via text message.
- 5.6 If there are any issues with sprays reported to the Northland Regional Council, they contact me directly, and I have provided information as required.

The Need to Spray

- 5.7 Spraying is used both to:
- (a) Protect plants from disease and pests that would damage plant health and life expectancy, and
 - (b) Protect fruit from damage or pests that would reduce its value or international market access.
- 5.8 Different pests and disease are prevalent at varying times throughout the year depending on weather conditions or pest life/breeding cycles.
- 5.9 Spray timing is critical to be effective in combating these threats.
- 5.10 Ideal weather conditions are required for application of sprays to reduce drift and ensure effectiveness of the application.

- 5.20 Those at the tough end of the spectrum are particularly hard to deal with, as despite orchardists complying with the legal requirements, I have been forced to play politics rather than practicalities.
- 5.21 With this group their 'go to threat' is often to say they will call the council to report the activities. It only takes one of these neighbours bordering an orchard to put at risk the viability of farming.
- 5.22 I have had to skip important sprays on some orchards due to the impossibility of getting agreement with one neighbour on whether conditions are suitable despite multiple attempts.
- 5.23 Sensitivities are usually around spray drift, and also odours have been an issue. For some neighbours the thought of an airblast sprayer can be offensive.
- 5.24 I have had a couple of incidences where a neighbour has called me to complain about no notification of spraying. My enquiries showed that lime was being spread on the orchard and the dust was thought to be spray drift. On the same orchard mulching was confused for spraying also.
- 5.25 Washing on the line has been brought up as an issue and reason not to spray.
- 5.26 In the case of one orchardist who we did not spray for, they asked me do all their notifications for approximately 3 years to prevent the terse emails being sent back to their notifications.
- 5.27 New neighbours to our orchards in Kerikeri are tending to be from out of town, with some from the cities. In my experience, their tolerance of spray operations tends to be less than locals who have grown up with understanding that spraying is part of rural life.
- 5.28 Pets are an area of concern with some neighbours locking their cats inside on spray day, or tying their dogs up. This can become a source of tension if the neighbour works and spraying does not go ahead and they have to repeat the process all over again on another day.

Circumstantial Sensitivities

- 5.29 The following are the most common circumstances that I have encountered where neighbours become more sensitive to spraying than they had been:
- a. A partner becoming pregnant can make a previously agreeable neighbour increase in sensitivity. In one case I offered to pay for a motel to accommodate the pregnant women and family, so that a critical spray could be applied.

This was a loss to our operation from a capacity point of view, but necessary to protect our ability to continue spray work.

- 5.36 I anticipate that the orchards in the vicinity of the PC13 site will experience the issues that we face in Kerikeri, and most likely to a greater extent given the scale of the development.
- 5.37 I note that a retirement village is proposed within the PC13 site, bordering Mike Jones' orchard. I do not need to notify any retirement villages of our spraying in Kerikeri, but I do consider that they would be a difficult neighbour due health concerns of residents and the fact that they do not leave the property regularly to go to work. Overall, notification requirements for spraying as a result of PC13 will be a considerable burden on the Ripponvale orchardists in my view.
- 5.38 In closing:
- (a) Orchardists face a number of challenges to the success of their business, many the same as any other business owners. With added complications of seasonal variation, weather and seasonal staff availability.
 - (b) Orchard spraying is a critical task that needs to be timed appropriately to have effectiveness and protect economic benefit.
 - (c) Spraying is an emotive topic with neighbours that can easily become a very time consuming and often an illogical problem to solve. The wider community can become divided.
 - (d) One neighbour can be the catalyst for ongoing problems affecting the viability of an orchard and its stakeholders.

Carl Muller

2 July 2019