

**BEFORE THE COMMISSIONERS APPOINTED ON BEHALF OF
CENTRAL OTAGO DISTRICT COUNCIL**

Under The Resource Management Act
 1991 (the **Act**)

In the Matter of an application for resource
 consent RC230328

Between **CLUTHA PLAINS TRUST**
 Applicant

And **CENTRAL OTAGO DISTRICT**
 COUNCIL
 Local Authority

BRIEF OF EVIDENCE OF JONNY TREVATHAN

DATED 25 MARCH 2025



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BRIEF OF EVIDENCE OF JONNY TREVATHAN

1. My name is Jonny Trevathan and I am a Trustee of Clutha Plains Trust. We own 133ha at 5 Maori Point Road which is the subject of this application. We also lease 440ha on Jolly Road, near Bendigo and in the Ardgour Valley.
2. I am a fourth-generation Central Otago resident, with my great-grandfather having settled in this region. Having grown up on local farms, I have been personally engaged in farming for the past twenty-two years. My deep-rooted connection to this area is reflected in my active participation in various community organizations, including:
 - Tarras Volunteer Fire Brigade (14 years of service)
 - Tarras Hall and Recreation Committee
 - Convenor of the Tarras Golf Course
 - Committee member of the Lindis Catchment Group
 - Member of the Christchurch International Airport Limited (CIAL) Community Funding Committee
 - Tarras Collie Club
3. My commitment to the community extends to supporting local businesses and fostering a sense of connection with local entrepreneurs. Additionally, my two young daughters attend the Tarras Playgroup and are expected to enrol in Tarras School soon, continuing our family's participation in the community.

Land-Use Changes and Community Growth

4. The advent of efficient irrigation systems has been a game changer for productivity in Central Otago. It is a naturally harsh and unpredictable environment characterized by hot summers and a short growing season. As a result these systems have been transformative. They

enable farmers to optimise favourable weather conditions before the onset of dry periods, effectively allowing us to "make hay while the sun shines."

5. Over the past 15 to 20 years, Central Otago has experienced notable shifts in land use, primarily due to:
 - (a) The expansion of irrigation facilitating growth in the viticulture and horticulture sectors. The landscape now features numerous pivots, extensive bird netting, frost fans, and associated infrastructure such as pump sheds.
 - (b) There is a growing demand for rural living opportunities from individuals seeking respite or escape from urban environments and from former farmers wishing to downsize while remaining in a rural setting.
6. This influx has resulted in a more vibrant community, benefiting local retail and hospitality businesses in and around Tarras, and invigorating various community groups and facilities.
7. Change is an inherent aspect of community development, and proactive preparedness is preferable to reactive responses. In the Tarras and Bendigo regions, two significant projects have the potential to bring about considerable change:
 - (a) **Proposed Tarras Airport:** Christchurch International Airport Limited (CIAL) has acquired land in the Tarras area with plans to develop a new international airport. This proposal has been a subject of community discussion and varying opinions. It has also attracted the likes of Tarras Industries to the area.

- (b) **Bendigo-Ophir Gold Mining Project:** Exploration and potential development of gold mining operations in the Bendigo-Ophir region could impact the local economy and environment.
8. While the outcomes of these projects remain uncertain, it is evident that the area continues to attract interest, underscoring the need to balance productivity with the preservation of the region's unique characteristics.

The Property

9. Historically known as "The Ranch," our property is situated in a picturesque area near Tarras, bordered by both the Lindis and Clutha Rivers. This location offers stunning views over the Upper Clutha River and the surrounding hills, providing ample opportunities to appreciate the natural beauty of the environment.
10. The property operates predominantly as a sheep and beef farm, with some small-scale cropping. It is largely irrigated using water from an on-site bore, employing a combination of pivot and K-line irrigation systems. This approach ensures efficient water usage, which is particularly important in regions like Tarras that experience low annual rainfall, averaging approximately 400 mm.
11. In 2009, recognizing the unique ecological significance of parts of the property, my parents took the commendable step of voluntarily placing a portion of the land under a QEII National Trust covenant. This initiative was prompted by my father's intuition about the site's special nature, leading to the involvement of the late Dr. Brian Molloy from the QEII Trust. Dr. Molloy identified an abundance of locally and nationally endangered plants on the property.
12. The QEII National Trust works collaboratively with private landowners to protect diverse natural features, including forest remnants, wetlands,

shrublands, grasslands, and habitats for threatened species. These covenants are voluntary agreements that ensure the protection of these areas in perpetuity.

13. In 2023, a reassessment of the covenanted area and some of the surrounding land was undertaken in collaboration with the QEII Trust. It revealed that the endangered plants my father aimed to protect were not only surviving but, in some cases, expanding their presence. This positive development led to the establishment of an additional 2 hectare covenant, designed with a rabbit-proof boundary, to further support and encourage the growth of this unique ecosystem.
14. Such proactive conservation efforts are vital in preserving New Zealand's biodiversity, especially in regions like Central Otago, where unique habitats face various environmental pressures. By safeguarding these areas, landowners play a crucial role in maintaining the country's natural heritage for future generations.
15. Finally, we have been unable to install more efficient irrigation on the remainder of the top terrace because it is diagonally dissected by a 66kV sub-transmission line. The Lindis Crossing substation is located at the corner of the property which was built in 2014. As set out in the application documents we would like to realign the transmission line as part of this subdivision process. The subdivision will provide the capital necessary to undertake this work and make it possible to install pivot irrigation on this area. Pivots enable feed to be grown much more efficiently than even the existing K-line. We would expect dry matter production to increase by up to 20%, easily offsetting any 'lost production' from the subdivision proposal.
16. To put that into perspective, under K- line I can produce approx. 850kg/meat per/ha per/year under pivot I can produce approx. 1275kg/meat per/ha per/year. Across this property currently my annual production has been an average of 1180kg/meat per/ha per/year, this

means if the average person was to eat 250gm meat per day I would feed 1719 people per day for every day in a year or 627,760 servings which is enough for every person in Dunedin to have a meat based meal for 4.7 days.

17. With this subdivision I will be able to maintain that level of productivity (probably slightly better) whilst also accruing the benefits that come from the development itself including jobs during construction and the flow on benefits from having 16 new households move into the area.

Subdivision Considerations

18. When we decided to explore the possibility of subdividing our property, several key considerations guided our planning:

(a) *Avoiding the Lower Terrace:*

- (i) *Flood Hazards:* By steering clear of the lower terrace, we aim to mitigate potential flood risks, aligning with regional flood hazard data.
- (ii) *River Sensitivity:* Maintaining a large setback from the river helps protect sensitive riparian ecosystems, preserve water quality, biodiversity and minimises the effects on the amenity of the river environment. It also helps avoid potential effects on the cultural values associated with the Clutha River / Mata Au.
- (iii) *Neighbourly Respect:* We recognise the Marsh family's appreciation for their terrace's amenity at 165 Bowman Road and aim to be considerate neighbours by keeping development distant from their property.

(b) Preserving Land Productivity:

- (i) Subdividing into 8-hectare lots was considered but deemed impractical. Such fragmentation could disrupt existing irrigation infrastructure and lead to a patchwork of varied land uses, diminishing overall agricultural productivity.

(c) Maximizing Site Assets:

- (i) The top terrace offers impressive views which have proven popular in other developments. Focusing development here allows us to enhance this aspect while preserving the lower terrace's natural state and minimising the impact on overall site productivity. In light of the submissions and section 42A report we have also reworked the subdivision layout a bit which pulls some lots away from the terrace edge, and makes the most of the impressive outlook to the distant hills and ranges.

(d) Efficient Servicing and Management:

- (i) Concentrating development in specific areas facilitates more efficient infrastructure servicing and cohesive land management of the amenity areas surrounding the Lots and the wider balance lot which will continue to be managed as a cohesive farm block.

19. With all that in mind we have worked closely with Patersons and Align to develop the subdivision plan. Through the process we have been pretty open about our plans and to receiving feedback. We held an open day, unfortunately only nine people attended (5 to offer support, 2 asked questions of concern from their readings but after being onsite got a better understanding and went away congratulating me on the

application and the efforts to enhance and protect sensitive areas and Dad visited).

20. We have continued to evolve the proposal (over almost two years) as we have received feedback and submissions. I am pleased and proud with where we have landed.

Summary

21. In developing the subdivision plan, the Trust prioritised several key considerations:
 - (a) **Avoiding the Lower Terrace:** To mitigate potential flood hazards, protect sensitive river environments, and respect neighbouring properties, particularly the Marsh property at 165 Bowman Road.
 - (b) **Preserving Land Productivity:** Recognising existing investments in irrigation infrastructure, the Trust aimed to maintain the land's agricultural viability.
 - (c) **Enhancing Site Assets:** The top terrace offers impressive views, making it a favourable location for development while providing opportunities for site enhancement.
 - (d) **Efficient Servicing and Management:** Ensuring that the subdivision could be effectively serviced and managed was a critical aspect of the planning process.
22. Over nearly two years, the proposal has evolved based on feedback and submissions, reflecting the Trust's commitment to thoughtful development that balances agricultural productivity, environmental stewardship, and community interests.

Dated 25 March 2025

Jonny Trevathan

Trustee of Clutha Plains Trust