

SUBMISSION ON APPLICATIONS FOR RESOURCE CONSENTS FOR THE CENTRAL PLAINS WATER SCHEME

STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE BY ANDREW JOHN COOK ON BEHALF OF GUARDIAZ, P.O. BOX 6066, CHRISTCHURCH

My name is Andrew John Cook. I am a social researcher. I have my own business called Environment Research and am also currently employed on a contract basis by Lincoln University. I hold a Degree in Resource Studies, a Master of Applied Science in Environmental Management and a PhD in Psychology. All were awarded by Lincoln University. I have over five years experience in surveying the public on environmental issues.

I have conducted survey research on public opinion regarding freshwater issues and management in Canterbury. The following is from the summary from the research report titled 'Freshwater Issues and Management in Canterbury: Results from a Survey of Public Opinion' which I have submitted as evidence.

Research aim

- The aim of the research was to measure Canterbury public opinion on freshwater issues and management.

Method

- A questionnaire was designed containing 13 measures of opinion and measures of age, income and gender.
- The survey was conducted by telephone to households in Canterbury from July 9th to 23rd, 2008. Telephone numbers were randomly derived from publicly listed household telephone numbers. Replies were taken from people 18 years and over.
- Five hundred responses were taken and the response rate was 46.6 per cent.

Representativeness

- As is not uncommon, there was over or under representation of some age and income groups and more women than men responded. Differences with census results were identified and there was evidence of minor bias in terms of age, income and gender for some opinion measures. The effects of both were taken into account.

Results

- Almost all (96.2 per cent) indicated agreement that water in Canterbury rivers should be suitable for swimming, fishing and other recreational activities.
- Almost all (99 per cent) agreed the priority for water management should be to ensure each home has a 'good supply of clean, safe and inexpensive water'.
- Almost all (98.2 per cent) indicated agreement that the quality and quantity of water in rivers, lakes, streams and aquifers should be protected for the benefit of future generations.
- A large proportion agreed (91.5 per cent) that chlorinating household drinking water should be avoided.
- More disagreed (39.1 per cent) than agreed (36.2 per cent) that there should be charges for water above a basic allocation but together with those who neither agreed nor disagreed (24.7 per cent), most respondents (60.9 per cent) did not oppose having to pay.
- The majority agreed (59.2 per cent) that farmers and commercial users should have to pay for each litre of water used. Just over 18 per cent (18.1 per cent) disagreed.
- The majority agreed (69.8 per cent) and 11.5 per cent disagreed that irrigation for intensive livestock farming would lead to contamination of drinking water supplies and poorer water quality in rivers, streams or lakes.
- A large majority agreed (83.5 per cent) that the community should not have to pay for clean up of environmental damage resulting from farming.
- A large majority agreed (81.1 per cent) to hold on allocation of water for irrigation until research had been done so as to ensure that the quality and quantity of water would not fall below acceptable standards. Just over seven percent (7.1 per cent) disagreed.
- While the community may benefit from the use of irrigation water for farming, most (56.7 per cent) were unwilling to accept the effects on drinking water supplies, rivers, streams and lakes. Nevertheless, 26.4 per cent agreed the effects would be acceptable.
- Many (33.8 per cent) indicated they 'don't know' whether current legislation protects drinking water supplies and rivers, streams and lakes from contamination. For those who responded, just over half agreed (51 per cent) it provided protection and 31.7 per cent disagreed.
- More agreed (41.5 per cent) than disagreed (30.1 per cent) that Environment Canterbury was judged to have 'done its job' of managing freshwater.
- Just under one third agreed (31.4 per cent) and just over one third disagreed (34.4 per cent) that local and regional councillors have adequately represented the views and interests of the community on water management. However, of the 500 respondents 20.8 per cent said they 'don't know'

Implications and recommendations

- The research shows that the Canterbury public would be readily supportive of the objectives of (1) having water of suitable standard for contact and other forms of

recreation, (2) having a good supply of clean, safe and inexpensive water, and (3) protecting the quality and quantity of freshwater for future generations.

- The maintenance of water sources that do not require treatment should be a priority given widely held strong objections to adding chlorine to drinking water.
- All else being equal, the taking of water for irrigation that facilitates more intensive agriculture and damage to clean water sources is not acceptable to the public. It is recommended that the public be provided with evidence of detailed consideration of such adverse effects to alleviate public concern.
- The community is unwilling to bear the costs of environmental damage to freshwater from agriculture. Consideration needs to be given to addressing this seemingly intractable problem.
- The public would support a hold on considering applications for the use of water until research has been done sufficient to guarantee an acceptable standard.
- As there is a good deal of concern about water issues and freshwater management, it is recommended that more attention be given to informing and involving the public.