

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

AND

IN THE MATTER of applications by the  
Central Plains Water  
Trust (CPWT) and the  
Ashburton Community  
Trust (ACWT)

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**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE BY CHRISTOPHER ANTHONY BASCAND**

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**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 My name is Christopher Anthony Bascand. I live in the Schoolhouse, Homebush Road, Glentunnel. Glentunnel is situated 15km SW of Darfield, under the foothills of the Southern Alps. I am employed by the Glentunnel School Board of Trustees as Principal of the Glentunnel School. I have served the Ministry of Education for 16 years.
- 1.2 I was born and raised in Pictou, with my schooling taking place in a small rural school in the bay of Waikawa - the school was once a Native School, and I was a rarity there, as the predominant attendee was of Maori descent. I would bike to school each day along a dusty gravel road, spend time throwing stones in the river or off the wharf, and then enjoy a day at the local school. From there, I attended Queen Charlotte College - on the edge of Pictou. There, I learnt the love of what a township based in the Sounds has to truly offer, and we spent a good deal of time tramping or kayaking the Queen Charlotte Sounds. It was here that I became

passionate about my future career, teaching, and the rewards of being educated in smaller schools.



(Fig 1.) The beautiful Waikawa Bay.

- 1.3 My family split at a young age, and the days of the 'benefit' were very much still in formation. I spent a large amount of my time being raised by my grandparents, and know that I am richer for this - my childhood was blessed. They taught me to love life, that money does not buy what is most important, and to make the most from what you have. "There but by the grace of God go I" was the underpinning philosophy that my Grandmother brought me up with.
- 1.4 Training to be a teacher started for me at the young age of 17, in Christchurch. Three years later I graduated and taught in Christchurch for two years. I did not enjoy city life at all, and headed to the West Coast. I lived there for the next eight years of my life, teaching in remote rural schools, ranging from sole charge through to three teacher schools. All of these schools have now closed.
- 1.5 My love for the ruggedness, uniqueness and beauty of the West Coast remains with me even today. I continue to fill with sadness when I see the abuse of the Coast happening, as profiteers rape the land and 'fly by night'.
- 1.6 After marrying and starting a family, the shift to Canterbury occurred - the compromise being, "if I live in Canterbury, it would be in the country!"
- 1.7 I have consequently been a resident of Glentunnel for 2 ½ years now along with my wife, Sharlene - a teacher, my son James (3), daughter, Alice (2) and expecting our third child to be delivered in July. We chose to live in Glentunnel for the rural lifestyle that the

town offered, along with the luxury of enjoying the support and love of extended family in both Christchurch and Oxford. Our desire to raise our family with these qualities, we believe, leaves us being the privileged few in today's world.

- 1.8 Since being a resident of the community, I have become involved in both the township committee and of late, the Malvern Hills Protection Society, especially around the debate with the proposed dam planned to be erected in the Coalgate area. My statement of evidence is intended to provide an overview of the area I live in and serve, why I enjoy living in this area of such natural beauty, and fears I hold for both the education and resources of our younger generations.
- 1.9 I believe that the proposed development of the dam for Central Plains Water Scheme will adversely and irreversibly affect the natural beauty of the Malvern Hills, cause irreparable damage to the Canterbury Plains in the short and long term and does not in any way show foresight to the healthy survival of the greater population in the future.

## **2. THE REGION KNOWN AS SOUTH MALVERN**

- 2.1 The South Malvern region consists of the land spanning mainly from Homebush in the Northwest through to Whitecliffs in the South west. The area is steeped high in history. Early history indicates that the land was well walked by the Maori, using this area as a pathway to connect to the West Coast - there are many areas in the Glentunnel and Coalgate area where there are significant sites to the Maori, including caves for shelter. Old locals are able to show places where the Moa have left gullet stones. The first European settlers of great significance are the Deans family, who of course resided here after the land transfer agreement from Christchurch. Their land here was once immense, and the family continues to work the land of their forefathers to this day. Their home land is under threat through the proposal for the erection of the CPW dam.
- 2.2 The Malvern Hills is rich in coal and is possibly where it made its name in Canterbury history. The hills are still mined today, producing a low sulphurous coal, supplying the local District Health Board boilers and Canterbury Breweries.



(Fig 2.)Traction engines await loading in Coalgate, to transport fluming to Lake Coleridge.

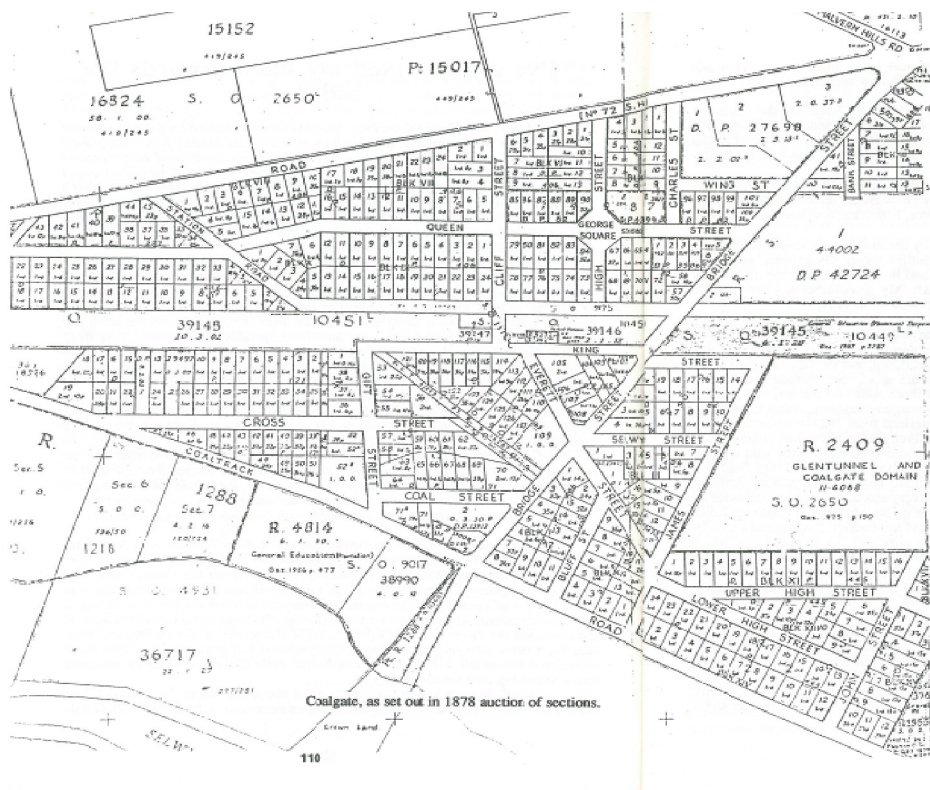
- 2.3 The population of the area is beginning to grow, as we are experiencing at the local school. The desire to live in a more rural environment, within close proximity to work is an attraction for many. Along with this is the beautiful setting that the area provides, close to the hills, away from the prevailing Nor'Wester that Canterbury is famous for, and the life style - rivers, fresh air and a greater sense of safety and freedom - all the reasons that I chose to live here myself.
- 2.4 The area of South Malvern has an industrial background too, with the production of bricks and other ceramic wares. A large mine situated in the back of Glentunnel still exists where clay and coal were taken. The 'McSkimmings' name on basins and toilets originates from this area. The factory closed in 1984. Bricks are now made in Darfield with a good deal of the clay still coming from the area. Coalgate was the junction for the rail line, which in turn transported goods to wider Canterbury.



(Fig 3.) Our local Post Office and Library, built with bricks made at our local pottery, on land donated by the Deans family.

- 2.5 Coalgate was once picked to be a satellite city, with the plans drawn at an early time for many sections and housing. These plans

are just starting to be utilised now, as many of the titles are being split for sections and the erection of new houses. This is a healthy indication for the area.



(Fig 4.)The township of Coalgate, planned out in 1878.

- 2.6 A dump was once proposed for the area, where the refuse of the city would be transported to and disposed of. This was to be in the foothills of Coalgate, however was declined due to the fact that the dump was to be sited on a fault line. Ironically, this same site is now the proposed site for the dam - a far greater risk to a greater population one would believe, than a dump.
- 2.7 The school has a vital role in the communities that it serves. Coalgate, for a short period in history, had a side school - one attached to the Glentunnel School. Other schools in both Homebush and Whitecliffs are now part of the history books. The school at Glentunnel brings the community together for many reasons, and maintains a strong sense of community across the three townships. The safety, wellbeing and future of our children are always foremost in the intentions of the school. Our mission statement is, "Treasuring today, building tomorrow".



(Fig 5.) Images from Glentunnel School.

- 2.8 The attraction of the area to this day, is the joy that children today can still celebrate the pleasures that we, as children, once had, and is sadly, a dying privilege. That is, the ability to roam and explore, climb trees, play and investigate the river, run in the paddocks, go mushrooming or eeling, and live in a safe village community.

### 3. CONCERNS

- 3.1 The wellbeing of a family relies heavily on the influences that directly or indirectly impact on them. This may be health, finances, job security or environment. The Central Plains Water Scheme has not been able to assure the members of the district that the dam would allow them to sleep safely at night without the threat of breakage. An earth dam of the size that is being proposed will cause irreparable damage to the township, should a breakage occur. Loss of life is definite. Time to escape for any family is next to zero. As the Principal of a primary school, the well being of all families that attend the school is foremost in my mind. Families trust that I will ensure that students attending this school are safe. Can the owners of the current proposed dam offer the same assurances to the people who live in the shadow of the dam? Secondly, how many of the major shareholders will live in the same shadow of this proposed dam? A recent example of this is the smaller version dam in the upper regions of the Fairlie district - the Opuha dam. This broke and caused severe damage. Thankfully, it breached high above the town, and quickly found the river course - without the loss of life. While this dam is significantly smaller, it happened in the middle of the night, without warning.

*Waitangi Day, 6 February, 1997 is a day that will remain on the minds of flood warning staff of Environment Canterbury (ECan) probably for the rest of their lives. The partially completed Opuha Dam near Fairlie in South Canterbury failed at about 1.00 am that morning, releasing about 13 million cubic metres of water into the Opuha Riverbed (Figure 1). Fortunately no lives were lost although in the days that followed there were stories of a number of very close escapes: campers scrambling*

*through riverside berm areas with trees crashing around them and farmers in the same situation trying to shift stock. We were actually very fortunate. Opuha Dam is built at the entry to the Opuha River Gorge about 12 km from the township of Fairlie and 170km from Christchurch (Figure 2). The Opuha River is a typical Canterbury gravel bearing, braided river with a catchment area of 500 km<sup>2</sup>. The average daily flow (pre-dam) is about 3 cumecs and the mean annual flood is 100 cumecs. Before this event, the biggest recorded flood in the Opuha River in recent times had been on 13 March 1986, when 600 m<sup>3</sup>/s was recorded with a nominal return period of 50 years. A PMF for the Opuha River is estimated to be in the range of 1500–2000 cumecs.*

**Ref. Emergency management, Opuha Dam collapse, Waitangi Day 1997**

Philip Lees<sup>1</sup> and David Thomson<sup>2</sup>,

<http://www.ipenz.org.nz/nzsold/2003symposium/largedams2003pages84-104.pdf>



(Fig 6.) The Opuha dam after the breach.

- 3.2 The benefits to the area are more employment and rising school rolls. This prediction has been made. Glentunnel School is a zoned school, stretching from Glenroy in the South across to Rowallen Road, in the north west. This catchment takes in the proposed dam. The risk to the school in Glentunnel is more than likely to be decreased as people choose to leave a threatened area. Any roll growth predicted, in my opinion, would be temporary, provided by the arrival of workers to the area. With the main population of Canterbury residing in Christchurch, and this city being only 40minutes away, the chances of significant growth seems minimal.
- 3.3 The school currently provides employment to nine people, serves sixty six students, and over forty families. We contribute to the local economy, with over \$500 000 per annum being distributed in the area through wages and salaries, or operating grants. This could potentially be lost.

3.4 As the proposed dam takes in a part of our zone, bus routes are lost (Malvern Hills Road in particular). The other roads in the district will experience greater concentration of traffic, especially heavy machinery, putting the transportation of students to and from school, at greater risk. The town's infrastructure does not have wide roads, footpaths, and has a 100km/h highway through the middle. It is in my opinion that the safety of students would be jeopardised.



(Fig 7.) Scenes from the construction of the Opuha earth dam, Fairlie. Scenes such as this, blasting, heavy machinery and dust bowls threaten Coalgate.



(Fig 8.) The planned canal (in red) through the township of Coalgate. This borders the township, and is planned to be 5metres high. How will our children be protected from this open waterway?

3.5 The main beneficiaries are the land-owners who use dairy farming as the main income. My teaching background has been predominantly in the rural area. Many of these areas have been in dairy farmed communities. As mentioned, all the schools in these areas have now closed. While the need for amalgamation of some schools seemed important, the loss to the community and students is still felt. I wish to elaborate further on this.

3.6 The West Coast is a strong dairy area. However they do not face the same pressures of rain/ water supply. I was appointed Principal of Totara Flat School in 1996. At that time, the roll was dwindling

as the Forestry Service had pulled out of the township. The school was at risk. The dairy industry began to boom in the area and the roll quickly climbed, as did all the schools in the valley. The roll peaked at 70 and the school had never been better. The Ministry of Education quickly responded, with well over \$400 000 of tax payers funding being released to update and provide further facilities to Totara Flat School.

3.7 The rolls for the neighbouring schools celebrated the same growth:

- Ngahere - average roll - 30 - 40
- Ahaura - average roll - 25 -35
- Moonlight - average roll 17 - 20
- Totara Flat - average roll - 50 - 70
- Haupiri -average roll - 5 - 9

My maths brings this to a roll range, combined, to be between 117 - 175. These schools have now all closed, with one new school being built, catering for a roll of between 100 - 120. This is a significant difference, and clearly shows that while the dairy industry may bring roll growth, it will too, bring decline.

3.8 Another example of the dairy industry being the death knell for rural schools is Dacre School in Southland. This school recently celebrated a roll of near 80. The dairy industry, in the opinion of the local people, has brought the roll to 4, bringing closure. Again, this is another community that has suffered at the hands of growth, and as we know, once a school has closed, the Ministry of Education will never reopen the school.

### **School to close after numbers drop to four**

By Sarah Bedford - The Southland Times | Monday, 24 December 2007



ROBYN EDIE/Southland Times/Image ID117320

**SCHOOL'S OUT:** The official closing of Dacre Primary School after 109 years was held last week with a tying of a black ribbon at the school entrance on December 20. The school's current five pupils (from left) Caleb Dearlove, 8, Sharna Brownlie, 10, Isabella Burnett, 6, (front in red), Josh Sutherland-Hyland, 8, (in green) and William Burnett, 8, with the oldest ex-pupil attending Brian McLeod, 83, who started at the school in 1929.

By PHIL McCARTHY - The Southland Times | Monday, 26 November 2007

**Dacre Primary School will close its doors next month after 108 years after its roll dropped to just four pupils.**

Education Review Office (ERO) reports show the school's roll was 36 in 2003, dropping to 23 in June last year and eight in June of this year. Former school board chairman Doug Stevenson said the school's remaining pupils would probably have to go to Te Tipua School, or Woodlands. "Unfortunately there's just not the kids in the district.

"It's a bloody disaster, but when you drive around the country you see these things happening." Once a district's school closed, the community was shot.

The school once had a roll of between 60 and 80 pupils, he said.

The dairying boom had been one factor behind the school's unfortunate demise.

There had been many families farming in the district in past decades, but most of the area was now owned by a small number of dairy farmers, Mr Stevenson said.

The school was very well equipped with a heated pool, double tennis courts, playground equipment and computers.

The community had also run a small farming operation throughout the years on the school's 13 acres to raise funds for various maintenance and building projects, he said.

The community had put a lot of money into the school over the years, and a meeting will be held on November 29 at the school at 7.30pm, so the school's board of trustees can put together information regarding possible compensation from the Ministry of Education. Mr Stevenson said he hoped the school buildings would be used for something else, such as a hostel for dairyworkers.

"You'd need a Sherman tank to knock (the building) down." An ERO report from June said Dacre School was a small rural school with a roll of 8 students from Years 1-4.

In the last year the school's roll had decreased and students learned within one multi-level classroom.

As there were no Years 5-8 students, the school's progress in meeting the needs of senior students in writing, social studies and careers education was not evaluated, the report said.

The school is holding a wind-up barbecue for past and present pupils, staff and friends of the school on December 20.

(Fig 9.) Articles on the closer of Dacre School in Southland.

- 3.9 The promise of roll increase - I do wish to expand on this further. The trend that I have experienced in the past is this. Farmer A has a farm that runs approximately 250 cows. In order to make the

farm more productive, it needs to be larger. The neighbouring farm comes on the market and is purchased by Farmer A. This is now a farm of around 500-600 -a far deal better and more productive. The need for further staff is not nearly as great. The other debate is that the small farm, being the starting point for many, is being lost as the larger farms consume them to make their own farms more productive.

3.10 A larger dairy farm needs many share milers and farm hands. This is true and there is no debate here. The trend that I experienced on the West Coast was as follows:

- A typical farm of 500 needed at least one couple and a single man. The couple may have 2 children. The benefits for the community are that the local school catchment receives a further 2 for the roll - often a real bonus as our schools are staffed and funded on student numbers. However, the situation changes when the children are sick or very young. Farmers are faced with the dilemma - a sick child is taken to the dairy shed while milking is on (usually first thing in the morning), sent to school regardless, or one of the parents remains at the home. This puts the workforce down by one, adding to the work pressures.
- The landowner is obliged to provide accommodation for the workers. A family of 4 -5, as is usually the case, needs at least a three bedroom home. If the farm requires two couples or more, that equates to an equal number of homes on the property. However, if all single men are appointed, the situation is very different - one 4 bedroom house for 4 workers is a far better financial move - less outlay costs, less maintenance, lower insurance.
- Calving season, twice a day milkings and other high demand periods for the dairy farmer put a real strain on the family. Parents are often unable to be involved in the day to day activities of the children. Children can be left alone - in remote rural areas.
- The wise land owner would appoint single men to run the farm, as I experienced in the Grey Valley. I am not solely convinced that roll growth is a good enough carrot for an area to be converted to dairy - as my past experiences have shown that the trend is boom then bust.

- 3.11 The impact on a child's education is jeopardised. The lifestyle of the share milker is transient. This is a massive problem being experienced by many New Zealand schools. We openly discuss the 'gypsy day' when our schools get invaded by unexpected arrivals or turned into ghost towns, as they up and leave. The average contract for a share milker is 12 months. They then leave the area. Children are uprooted from schools and forced to make a fresh start. The old saying, "give me a child to 7 and I'll give you a man" is a saying that stands the test of time. If we do not have children reading, writing and numerate by the age of 7, we have lost the child and the time can never be regained. This is a massive concern to the education sector in New Zealand, and one that we are going to suffer for in the future.
- 3.12 Sadly, this leads to poor literacy and numeracy skills in the higher schooling levels, a lowered ability to attend tertiary education. These students can quickly become behavioural problems for a number of schools, and do not experience the same kind of success that other students experience.
- 3.13 Friendships and stability is the key to children developing lifelong skills. When children live with constant change, they struggle to make strong friendships, as they never get the experience of developing these. This is a downside of the 'gypsy' lifestyle that the sharemilker experiences. While it is not the fault of the sharemilker, it is a downside of the lifestyle the position attracts. The Ministry of Education has an emphasis on developing Lifelong learners, with 'Relating to others' being cited as one of the key competencies that children need to develop. Take an average 5 year old sharemilker's child starting primary school. They are in a contributing Primary School (Years 1 -6) for 6 years. If their family experiences 6 one year contracts, they potentially face 12 teachers over their 6 years. As most farms are in rural areas, the local school would be multi level, meaning they may have between 2 and 3 teachers only. The typical rural child may only ever experience 2 - 3 teachers - all known to them, in their primary childhood.
- 3.14 Due to the commitments that parents have on farms, they are often unable to attend events which support their child's education, such as sports or sports days, open days and provide

assistance on school outings. Children can feel alone and learn from a young age, that school is the place that they attend each day and is a place that mum or dad don't support. This sets the pattern for the future - we often parent in the way that we were.

- 3.15 There was no consultation by the applicant with Glentunnel School before this hearing began. Recently, we received a call from someone asking about school bus routes, and whether any would be affected by the dam. Although the applicants claim they have consulted with a number of schools, this is certainly not the case with Glentunnel School. I believe this is an area where the applicant has performed poorly.
- 3.16 If the Central Plains Water Scheme shareholders were keen on capturing the interest and support of the local area, I believe that the local school would be a good vehicle to do this. Apart from the one recent phone call, there has been no attempt to discuss any impacts or benefits of the scheme with the school.
- 3.17 I am a regular church attendee, and through one of the services, Father spoke about water, compared this with the oil crisis and reference to the bible. As war is so rampant across the world, the discussions around oil and its finite future arose. A point that followed was this - 'it is not oil which is our future gold - it is water'. We are lucky to have such a resource in its purest form, on our back step. How can we justify potentially destroying a pure resource, for now and our future, for the sake of making a profit. Again, I express my deepest concern for the children who need to live with our decisions, in the future.
- 3.18 The Canterbury Plains have been well renowned for the ability to farm sheep. The introduction of dairy has added a new pressure on the land. What steps has the dairy industry and individual land owners taken to remedy this issue of water? Do they capture their own water? I.e. - smaller holding lakes on their farms, small dams on their own land? Before taking the resources from us all, maybe a greater level of personal responsibility and diligence could be seen from this sector.
- 3.19 If I have not said it once, it is the younger generation, who live with our decisions, and are expected to support us, who I feel for.

Can we live with the decisions that are made, for the large profits to be made by a select few?

3.20 The expanding dairy industry is supposed to be beneficial to New Zealand. The expectation is that by expanding this business further, we will continue to reap such great benefits and rewards. Why are we paying \$4.50 for one pound of butter? Why is 2L of milk now \$4.75? Why is Coca-Cola \$1.49 for 2L? The impact on children begins from a young age. We are facing a diabetes and obesity issue in New Zealand. In schools, we are required by law, to exercise children for 1 hour a week minimum. Our children benefit from drinking good milk yet for a struggling family, coke is the given and dairy products are the luxury! What are we doing to our future generation? How is more dairying going to benefit us? I do not believe that the general person on the street is going to reap the rewards.



(Fig 10.) Comics demonstrating my point.

3.21 The beauty of the Selwyn River lies at the back step of Glentunnel and Coalgate. Our children swim there in the summer - our families picnic there. It is pure, mountain fed water, pristine and mystical. Seaward of Coalgate the river disappears underground and re-emerges at a place known as Coes Ford. While travelling underground, it collects the residues and run-offs of our dairy neighbours. Coes Ford is often closed to swimming during the summer due to pollution and the high levels of contamination. The

childhood privileges we once embraced are no longer available for our children to enjoy. Are we prepared to allow this for our future? As a child of the 70's, I may not have had much, but I loved my life. Maybe having no money made me richer. However, I do know what I loved most - and none of it was bought - it was natural and clean.



(Fig 11.) My family and Gran' enjoying the Selwyn River.

#### **4. Conclusion**

- 4.1 Because of the overwhelming negative impacts that the CPW irrigation scheme would have on the Coalgate and the wider community, and the potential for irreversible adverse effects on the environment, I ask that the all resource consents be declined and that the Notice of Requirement be withdrawn.

He tangata, he tangata, he tangata

**What is the greatest thing? - It is people, it is people, it is people.**

**CHRISTOPHER ANTHONY BASCAND  
APRIL**