

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 Water Trust (ACWT)

Statement of Evidence of Grant Horner

Introduction

1. My name is Grant Horner. I live with my wife Bronwyn, in Queen Street Coalgate, Canterbury and have done so for 30 years. Our family of three have attended Homebush and Darfield schools and have enjoyed immensely their childhood spent in the area. Much time was spent at the Selwyn River, swimming and exploring, playing tennis at the Coalgate Domain, BBQs at Whitecliffs Domain and sporting events at Glentunnel Domain. In fact, many Canterbury people have done the same activities during the summer months whilst camping at the very popular Glentunnel or Whitecliffs Domains.
2. In 1976 we purchased approximately 1 hectare of land on Queen Street Coalgate and subdivided it into 3 lots. One for our personal family home, one for my company – Doppelmayr Lifts (NZ) Ltd, which supplies ski and tourist lift equipment all over New Zealand, and the remainder lot, is left as grazing land.



Horner's home on Queen Street Coalgate.

3. The property consists of our family home, an office and warehouse for storage of parts and installation equipment. This required a specific departure from the Malvern District Council, as it is an Urban Residential area of Coalgate. Across the road was the then named Canterbury Bentonite factory, now Transform Minerals Ltd.



Bentonite factory across Bridge Street.

4. Our house and office is located 250m from the proposed dam and closer to the construction site, which would, we expect, become a permanent activity over the 3-4 years of construction.
5. My statement of evidence is intended to provide an overview of the area we live in, demonstrating its rural aspect, landscape characteristics and to provide a description of the effects that Central Plains Water's irrigation scheme will have on us.
6. I believe the Notice of Requirement and associated proposed irrigation scheme resource consents will result in a significant adverse effect on our family, the town of Coalgate and the larger environment of the Canterbury Plains.

Personal Effects

7. Due to the close proximity of our house and office to the dam, all construction works associated with the dam and tunnel will impact on our peaceful enjoyment of Coalgate.



View from back yard of my home, the left hand abutment of the proposed dam will sit in the middle of the photo.

8. We are concerned with the increase in traffic as a result of the scheme being granted consent. The volume of traffic on the road will increase both during the construction phase and once the scheme is operational.
9. We anticipate that there will be an adverse swell impact as a result of the proposal. Fluctuating water levels in the dam will expose mud flats and vegetation resulting in adverse odours. Moving such an amount of soil will be a huge project producing large amounts of dust. Dust goes everywhere and into everything, what a nightmare for 3 years. No one should be asked to live with that.
10. As our home and office are located within 250 metres of the dam construction site and the Harper Hills ridge lies to the other side, any noise above the normal level will reach us, and then echo back off the ridge giving us a double dose of noise. We are alarmed to see that the noise levels proposed from blasting, pile driving and heavy machinery will exceed those allowable under the District Plan and further, that the construction sites that these noises will emanate from, will operate 24 hours per day and 7 days per week. As noted above we live adjacent to the Bentonite factory which, at times has operated day and night, creating noise and vibration, keeping us and our neighbours awake. Ground vibration is very disturbing and difficult to live with especially at night. Due to constant objections, the plant has vastly improved, by upgrading the equipment and of late, working fewer hours. This noise and disruption will be small compared to what a dam construction site would be.



Bentonite factory across the road from our office and house.

11. At present we look out from our house and office on to a great rural landscape of established trees and hills. The proposed dam will present a 2.2 kilometre long by 55 metre high wall which would be unacceptable to us. This is equivalent to a 2.2 kilometre long 16 storey high building!! The new Ferrymead apartment block nearing completion is only 7 stories high.



View from Queen Street property to proposed dam site.

12. Our premises are located downhill of the proposed dam structure. The Applicant has provided dam failure maps which show that the path of the water (should the dam fail) will completely destroy all in its path. The Applicant claims that the risk of failure is “infinitesimally small” and not worth worrying about. However, we submit that even if the risk is small, there is in fact still a risk over which we have no control. Being in the engineering business I am aware that major consulting engineering companies are

continually monitoring and checking existing dam structures throughout New Zealand and overseas. One engineer has told me based on data he has seen, that he would never live below any dam due to the risk of failure.

13. Coalgate is situated near the Selwyn River. It is a treasure of a river for recreation and just to spend time beside. Within one kilometre of Coalgate the Selwyn River disappears or submerges into the Plains to feed the aquifer and reappears to the east of the Main South Road. During the winter when river flows are higher, some water travels overland in the manner of a normal river. I believe that to extract large volumes of water from both of the bigger rivers and discharge it on the Plains above the aquifer and surrounding the Selwyn River could disrupt this special overland feature of the river.



Selwyn River.

14. We are concerned about the area of private land that will be removed from production to facilitate the reservoir, dam wall, level headrace canals and water distribution canals. This land is part of the integrity of the Canterbury Plains. It is here that farming families live and love their properties, without expecting lowlands to be forfeited for their gains. We understand that something in the order of 2,700 ha of usable land will be lost.
15. This scheme promises supply of water to farms, at a high water usage level per hectare with a high degree of reliability. This is largely driven by the needs of the dairy industry as opposed to the existing sheep and cropping industries, which require less water per hectare over a shorter period of time. The net result is that vast amounts of water need to be extracted from the two braided rivers and vast storage is required. This results in an expensive scheme with high upfront costs and high annual costs, which not surprisingly can only be afforded by the dairy industry (CPW documentation). We do not feel that this type of scheme will best serve the needs of the current farming community and imposes unnecessarily large negative effects on the environment and the wider community.

Conclusion

16. There are many other reasons why this proposal should not proceed in any way or form. These have been outlined by previous opponents of the scheme and are best left for them to argue.
17. Doppelmayr Lifts (NZ) Ltd is now owned by the parent company in Austria where many of their companies around the world are operated in an environmentally friendly manner.
18. Austrian representatives have taken a keen interest in this proposal and have visited Coalgate many times. It is their intention to move if the project obtains resource consent. Unfortunately, this means we would also have to move from the area.
19. For the reasons outlined above, I do not think that the Applicant's proposal for a large scale irrigation scheme in the Canterbury Plains represents an appropriate activity. I ask the Commissioners to withdraw the Notice of Requirement and decline all associated resource consent applications which would enable such a scheme to proceed.

**Grant Horner
Resident of Coalgate
Managing Director of Doppelmayr Lifts (NZ) Ltd
April 2008**