

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 James Murray Robertson

1. My name is James Murray Robertson. I live with my wife Maureen at Courtenay, on the banks of the Waimakariri River. I am a 4th generation farmer, and Trustee of the Glen Rannoch Trust (the “Trust”). The Trust also owns two farms in the Waianiwaniwa Valley. We have been farming for 50 years, 40 of those years on our own account. Our son Craig has leased the farm in the Valley, and I am now the Indian rather than the Chief.



Craig Robertson, 5th generation farmer.

2. In 1865 my Great Grandfather bought his first farm of 10 acres. Over the next few years he added more land. His son, my Grandfather, added another 136 acres, and my father added 82 acres. Each generation hoped that the land would be there for generations to come. This land was not given to us, my wife and I had to work very hard to purchase it from my father in 1967 and even harder to pay it off.

3. Since I was old enough to walk I have played, swum, shot ducks, fished and jet-boated on the Waimakariri River. I also irrigate from the river. I have seen its many moods, from walking across it without getting my knees wet, to seeing it a mile wide, with big waves sweeping everything in its path. So if CPW think they can tame the river, they should think again.



Waimakariri River.

4. As a water consent holder since 1969 (the 2nd consent holder for water from the Waimakariri) I am gravely concerned about the disastrous impact this scheme will have on our operation. We are already being affected by the Waimakariri Irrigation Scheme and if the Morrison¹ take ever gets going that will also affect us.
5. Before the big flood in the 1980's, we had our intake in a side braid of the river, and diverted water into this braid with a tractor with grader blade, or a bulldozer. This made the water markedly dirty as soon as the riverbed was disturbed.
6. When irrigating straight from the river, any day that the river was slightly discoloured, or when the Nor'west winds were blowing sand across the water, we experienced excessive wear on pumps and sprinklers.

¹ The son of CPWL Chairman Pat Morrison has been granted a separate consent to take water in the vicinity of Murray Robertson's take. The consent is in the name of Peter Morrison under the name P&E Ltd. The take is separate from the CPW proposal although Peter Morrison will switch to CPW water when the scheme is up and running, as part of his consent. All the locals refer to this consent as the Morrison take.

7. We were constantly diverting water into our intake. The big flood, when it came, took our concrete intake, and the 100 year-old poplar that had been protecting it. It flooded the pine forests that had been planted on the riparian verges of the river. After that flood, we gained a consent to dig a hole 25 metres back in the riparian strip of the river, which we now irrigate from.
8. I have noticed, over the years, that the water level in the hole only rises after a large fresh of over 90 cumecs or a flood. Less than that has no effect on the level.
9. Because of the years of experience I have had with our own small intake in the riverbed, I feel I know the moods of the river well. To expect to tame the Waimakariri is ridiculous. The constant work required in the riverbed and the flushing of the settling ponds will make the river unacceptably dirty for most of the time. I need clear water for my irrigation.
10. I consider that all the water presently in the river should stay in it. The river needs it for its aquifers. Flat-lining the river as CPW wish to do would also raise the water temperature. I am quite sure that the Waimakariri Irrigation Scheme is already having a detrimental cumulative effect on our take, and this will be exacerbated if the CPW irrigation scheme goes ahead.
11. If CPW consistently take the water down to 41 cumecs that would mean the rest of us would never get water.
12. Christchurch aquifers need to be recharged with clean water. If this does not happen and CPW are allowed to take all the available water in the Waimakariri, Christchurch may well find itself in the position of having to buy its water from CPW.
13. Losing our land in the Waianiwi Valley will have serious consequences on what is a balanced operation on the plains farms. This land requires only light irrigation. The valleys of the hill farms, being drought-proof, grow feed crops for all-year-round grazing.



Drought proof land in the Waianiwaniwa Valley.

14. We will have no stock access to our remaining properties in the Valley, via the Auchenflower Rd. We have been driving stock up and down this road from Courtenay to Sheffield for the last 26 years. Stock would have to be trucked if our access was denied. Will CPW pay for this?
15. Since CPW has designated some of our pine forest, I assume they are quite happy to pay the penalty carbon tax for permanently clearing it.



Forestry block on Abner's Head.

16. The impact of taking the designated land from farms will leave most farms in the Valley inoperable and most families displaced.

17. We bought these hill farms instead of putting irrigation on our own dry land blocks on the plains. It seems ironic that it is people, who did not have the foresight to do what we did, that now want to force us off our property so they can irrigate.
18. The extremely high productive land taken from us and the other plains farmers, for canals, would need to be replaced with 4 hectares of irrigated land for every 1 hectare taken, to have a status quo. Unfortunately, they are not making any more land.
19. I noticed, in Mr Macfarlane's economic report, that he has a chart of what land would produce pre and post CPW. He lists arable and process as producing nothing pre the CPW scheme. This is ridiculous. Our dry land block of 120 acres grows barley, peas, phacelia, grass-seed, clover-seed, and grass. Our neighbour is a very successful market gardener, without irrigation. Another neighbour grows over a thousand acres of barley, wheat, and small seeds without irrigation, to name but a few. Has Mr MacFarlane inflated the numbers and prospects to make the scheme look good?
20. The CPW scheme will have a detrimental effect on the Central Canterbury Plains climate because of the destruction of shelter-belts to allow centre pivots, the fog from the large area of water in the reservoir and the toxic dust storms from the empty reservoir. This is unacceptable. Dairying causes the most destruction of shelter-belts. Does this loss break the Kyoto Protocol?
21. The fact that CPW will build one bridge per farm would severely impact on farming operations; access is vital. The issue of liability concerning those bridges has not been addressed, e.g. the Berryman case in the North Island. There is a real safety concern in having only one bridge per farm.
22. In the 1980's there was a huge fire on the north bank of the Waimakariri River that travelled from Burnt Hill to Eyrewell. It happened during a gale-force Nor'wester and proved very hard to control. People were severely burnt trying to save their stock. If there were only one exit point from each farm, that puts everyone and all their stock in grave danger.
23. The other safety issue is children. They often have a fatal attraction to water, and there will only be stock fences to keep them out. Some canals follow roads and this is a real hazard to motorists who already have a habit of

running into fences, water races and power poles. The minimum requirement should be that canals following roads should be piped.

24. There is also the risk of flooding every time we have a power cut. This happens quite often during the irrigation season. The power companies seem to cut the power long enough to trip off the irrigation pumps, when they need more power down the line. This will result in houses, buildings, and crops being inundated.

25. What allowances have CPW made for stock races? Most farmers rely on them for stock water, and some use them for house supply. This scheme is grossly unfair on farmers not interested in irrigating.



Stock water race.

26. CPW has stated that for this scheme to work it would need 46,000 hectares of dairying. This would result in a drastic loss of shelterbelts, a loss of established family farms that have learned to farm to the conditions and would lead to transient communities. It would also add a lot of methane to the atmosphere.

27. There would be upheaval and inconvenience during the construction period, along with extremely heavy traffic on our poor roads. The vibrations and dust will damage homes and buildings. Who will pay?

28. I object to CRC061845. The proposed dam site is not a good idea. This site is far too close to the village of Coalgate and the ground is crumbly and unstable. The URS Geological investigation states, in Appendix C of the drill

hole logs, that most show weak to very weak sandstone. It does not sound like a good rock to anchor a dam to, and this is in an earthquake zone.

29. A PRIVATE COMPANY should never be allowed to put the people of Coalgate, and those on the flood plain in jeopardy. Brian Connell, our National MP, was horrified that no plans had been made to shift Coalgate.
30. I am sceptical about a company that refuses to answer questions, e.g. will not tell us how much has been factored in for compensation for land or for ruining our lives. Additionally, comments from the company are misleading, e.g. no Nor'west winds in the Valley February to May when it blows regularly at that time, that there are no school buses through the Waianiwaniwa Valley, when there is a school bus run for the Sheffield School and that there will be recreational benefits from the reservoir when everyone knows it will stink for years. And most important of all, says it has consulted with the Valley landowners when it has not. I feel we cannot trust CPW.
31. They are prepared to reduce some of Christchurch's aquifers by flat-lining the Waimakariri. As the population in Christchurch grows in these areas it will need more water, but there will be none to spare.
32. They are prepared to allow Didymo to spread into all the rivers between the Rakaia and the Waimakariri.
33. CPW will raise the water table in Prebbleton, Halswell, Rolleston, Springston, Tai Tapu, and Lincoln. This will result in ecoli, and sewerage problems. The Avon and Heathcote Rivers' water table will be raised. This will cause a loss of land to properties adjoining these rivers because the water table is already at ground level during the winter.
34. There has been no assessment of the cost of buying the land needed for this scheme.
35. This company does not meet the rules of a Requiring Authority. It has not consulted with all landowners. The Oxford Standard Dictionary definition of consultation is "*to seek permission or approval*".

36. They started off with enough people on both the Trust and the Company to control it, when the Trust was supposed to be independent. It is not transparent. They will not answer questions or provide information.
37. Other countries e.g. Holland and the U.S.A. (Wisconsin) have incredible problems caused by dairying. Why can't we learn from their mistakes?
38. It is not fair that people should have to spend so much time and money defending their right to keep their own land from a private company in this democratic country. We should be paid compensation for the profound stress that CPW have already caused. I have had nightmares about losing our land and have felt a sense of hopelessness. So I decided to fight back. Why should I lose what I have worked so hard to set up?



Fighting to keep our land.

39. For Mr. MacFarlane to infer that present day farmers are not intelligent enough to successfully farm their properties is bloody slanderous. Perhaps you can now understand why Mr. Habberfield-Short was refused access to Waianiwaniwa Valley properties. Landowners are furious about the lack of consultation.
40. A phone survey needs to be carried out of all properties affected by the reservoir, the headrace canal, or the distribution canals and the question asked "are you happy to have a reservoir or canal on your property?"
41. If only 200 submitted for the scheme, and over 1800 submitted against it, there is no way CPW can call it a community scheme.

42. I ask the Commissioners to withdraw the Notice of Requirement and all associated resource consent applications, which would enable the scheme to proceed.

James Murray Robertson
Courtenay
April 2008