

**IN THE MATTER**

**of the Resource Management Act 1991**

**and**

**IN THE MATTER**

**of applications by the Central Plains  
Water Trust (CPWT), Central Plains  
Water Ltd and the Ashburton  
Community Water Trust.**

## **Statement of Evidence of Margaret Eleanor Hawke**

### **Introduction**

1. My name is Margaret Eleanor Hawke. I farm a small property at Springbank near Rangiora. I have been a cattle and sheep farmer all my life.
2. I am making this submission because the information provided by the applicant grossly under estimates the severity of the weather conditions in the Waianiwaniwa Valley.
3. I object emphatically to the Central Plains Water scheme because it is based on hypothetical hearsay and not on reality.

### **History**

4. I lived and farmed with my parents in the Waianiwaniwa Valley for 25 years. Altogether the Hawke family farmed in the Valley for over 50 years.
5. My Grandfather Daniel James Hawke, in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century purchased about 2000 acres, including Hartley Hills and land across the road. The property was ring fenced but without improvements.
6. The family was living at Hawkins. The two eldest sons, William Arthur and Ernest Everett stayed in a hut on the Waianiwaniwa Valley farm during the week while they erected fences and planted

trees. Once sufficient development had been completed the family moved to the new property.

7. The Valley flats were stocked with dairy cows, the cream went to a dairy factory and the skim milk was fed to pigs. Sheep were run on the hill blocks. Agricultural work was done by a team of Clydesdale horses.
8. When the two elder sons were married, each was set up on approximately 500 acres with a home, milking shed and other necessities.
9. At the time the Estate of William Arthur Hawke was selling, his farm of 512 acres, was purchased by my father Leslie Payne Hawke, and a nephew Arthur William Hawke. A few years later my father became the sole owner.
10. I was aged two and a half when we moved to the farm and I have been actively involved in farming ever since. As we had a stud of pedigree Jersey cows my mother was involved with milking too. Hence, it was not long before I was feeding calves, teaching them to lead on a halter and making covers for them from sugar bags and innumerable other activities.
11. If the sheep were being mustered at the weekends or during school holidays, I was given the old dog and was part of the mustering team. It was not long before I was given a pup to train and that duty stayed with me. Not only were the pups taught to work sheep and cattle but also circus tricks like climbing the step-ladder and sitting on top.
12. With a 43 inch rainfall and the paddocks topdressed by truck or tractor and aerial top dressing on the hills, (my father was the first farmer in the area to aerial topdress) the land was growing good pasture.

### **My community**

13. The community we belonged to consisted of families who lived between the top of the Waianiwaniwa Valley and the Auchenflower Road. Also the Townshends whose farm adjoined the Auchenflower Road. (I believe you have already heard from Molly Townshend and her experiences in the Valley.)

14. Ten families shared the telephone line initially. Conducting business was difficult because there were several garrulous residents. If a doctor or veterinarian were required urgently it would be necessary to interrupt the conversation.
15. However, times of joy and sorrow were shared by all. Weddings, birthdays and anniversaries all came into this category, with “ladies a plate” taking care of the catering except for weddings. Community support was forthcoming when there were floods, fires, and missing persons.
16. Then there were Jock and Davy McQueen, the latter with his distinctive straw hat. The brothers lived in a one room hut and mined coal from the Bonanza mine, on the property known as the Poplars. That is to say they worked when they were in a mood or needed money.
17. Another character in our midst was Charlie Harcourt who farmed Abners Head (presently owned by the Robertson family). He kept a different time from the rest of NZ. At twilight we would hear him calling instructions to his dog Tweed, and Charlie would be riding his horse to muster the sheep. One day my father called and found Charlie and his helper asleep “on the board” at the shearing shed.

### **Coal mines in the Valley**

18. In our part of the Valley coalmines were operating on two sites. One at the Poplars and one at Sandown. The Taylor family travelled from Sheffield and Coalgate to their Sandown mine.
19. The coalmines, known and supposedly sealed, and additional shafts unknown to authorities pose the threat of contaminating the water. Apart from the mines mentioned above, there were innumerable sites in Bush Gully. As all that I have mentioned are on one seam, other sites along the seam would have been explored and hence more shafts will be there somewhere unknown.
20. “Shiny Bob” (Smith) who found the coal in this area was still investigating the seams and putting down shafts when I was going to school.

## **Flooding in the Waianiwaniwa Valley – the reality**



21. In the written material published by the applicants, which I have read, the climate has been misrepresented drastically. A report saying that there were no signs of major flooding must have been written by a self-styled authority – who at best had cruised through the Valley on a sunny day in the middle of a drought! At worst he had pushed a few buttons on a computer. Three days of persistent to heavy rain (less if the ground was already wet) meant no more absorption and resultant flooding. Likewise a significant snowfall followed by a mild nor'westerly thaw and continuing rain also created a major flood.

22. Floods occur spasmodically. In wet years there could be several major floods and in dry years there may be none.



23. The best way to explain the severity of the floods is to describe some of the events involved.
24. While I was at school from 1946 to 1957 inclusive, I travelled by school car for a year or two to Waddington School and then by school bus to Sheffield Consolidated School and finally to Darfield High School (the then Darfield District High School).
25. The frequency of the floods was such that the Valley pupils accepted them as a matter of course and likewise it was not an issue that raised attention from the other pupils. Someone would come to the classroom to inform the teacher. We would be told that the bus would be coming for us and we left immediately. The warning was always given in time for the children to be delivered home and the bus to get back to its headquarters.
26. The school buses were solid enough to convey 20 – 30 children and they were well above ground level. Only once did I see water on the bottom step of a school bus.
27. As a family we always arranged to be home during floods and were never isolated on the wrong side of the Waianiwaniwa River. Only once we took the risk to drive through a major flood to attend the

wedding of an uncle in Christchurch. Fortunately when we returned the flooding had gone.



28. During a major flood one bridge would be totally underwater and at the other we would lose the approach access. Water would cover the roads and the lower Valley flats.

29. Our milking herd of pedigree Jersey cows was run on river flats and on the downland. From time to time the cows would be on the wrong side of the flood at milking times in the mornings. My father, who had spent most of his life on the farm would assess the severity of the flood and decide if it was safe to bring the cows across. Our dogs, which were heading sheepdogs by breeding, excelled at multi-tasking and the main dog would be sent to swim over the Waianiwaniwa River to collect the milking herd. As they crossed, our cows would be forced downstream by the strength of the water.



30. The floods carry soil and clay washed from the river banks. I have stood near the river and seen slices of river bank carved off and washed away. There were several sites just on our property where this has happened. This sediment would fill the dam.

### **Erosion in the Waianiwaniwa Valley – the reality**

31. **EROSION** does happen in the Valley. The proposed scheme would exacerbate the degree and frequency.

32. About 1950 during a wet season, when the soil was waterlogged, I clearly remember standing at our road gate. From there I could see about 180 degrees around me and on every hill there were innumerable slippage scars. I'm not exaggerating and the hills behind our house and farmyard were in the same condition.

33. A trip the length of the Valley reveals significant signs of past erosion, particularly clay at the head of the slippage. These have occurred over a very long period.

34. After I read in the applicant's information that there would be no problem with erosion, I made a special trip and drove the full

length of the Valley from the top to bottom. I saw clay slippage in a significant number of places. The evidence is still there.

## **Wind**

35. Contrary to information printed by the applicants, north westerly winds do rise to extreme gale force at times within the Valley. In 1945 during a nor'west gale, at 11.30pm, my father went to investigate the location of a fire burning on the hills behind our property. Next morning when he arose he found that in the interim not only had 27 gum trees fallen across the road and a plantation of 20 –30 year old pine trees had been flattened, but 30 inches of snow lay on top of everything. We were cut off from Sheffield for about 10 days – no chain saws or helicopters in those days. The Council grader did not bother coming our way.
36. In the mid 1970's a severe nor'west gale bent two enormous pylons on Cairn Hill which were carrying power for the Cook Strait cable.
37. Not only does the nor'west wind come down the hill but it moves down the Valley from the Selwyn River, it also arrives through the Pig Saddle, and down the smaller valleys.
38. If the reservoir was built I envisage major dust storms in the area when the water level is drawn down in summer and wave erosion on the hillsides when the reservoir is full.
39. Bare exposed hillsides will create major erosion in times of heavy rain storms. I can imagine the ruts appearing on the hillsides as I write this.

## **Earthquakes**

40. There are known earthquake fault lines in and around the Waianiwaniwa Valley.
41. Earthquakes are more severe in the Valley than out on the Plains. My father told me that because the land in the Valley has a base of rock, jolting occurs. On the Plains the soil is on top of shingle which 'rolls', dissipating the severity of the movement.

42. My father also told me that in the 1920's Murchison earthquake the jolting was so severe he couldn't walk up the driveway to the family house in the Valley and had to sit down.

### **Conclusion**

43. I believe that a dam in the Waianiwaniwa Valley, with exposed hillsides bare of vegetation, is a disaster waiting to happen. The rainfall, approximately double of that on the plains, and the consequent flooding, heavy snowfalls from time to time and north westerly gales, will all create enormous pressure on the soil structure. Major erosion is inevitable.

44. I do have other issues of concern about the scheme, but these issues will be addressed by others. I ask the Commissioners to withdraw the Notices of Requirement and decline all resource consent applications.

**Margaret Hawke**  
**17 July 2008**