

**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)

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**Statement of Evidence of Maureen Robertson**

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1. My name is Maureen Robertson, I am a farmer and I live with my husband Murray at Courtney. I am the mother of three adult children, grandmother of six grandchildren, and a Trustee of the Glen Rannoch Trust (the "Trust") which represents one of the most grossly affected landowners.



**Maureen and Murray Robertson on Abner's Head farm.**

2. The Trust was established in 2002, before CPW chose the Waianiwaniwa Valley as its site of choice for the reservoir. It was set up to ensure that the properties owned by my husband and me, would be able to be farmed and enjoyed for future generations for at least another 80 years. The Trust also owns two farms in the Waianiwaniwa Valley, totalling over 600 acres.
3. I have been a committee member of the Malvern Hills Protection Society Inc. for 3 years but have been a member of the Society since 2002. Over these

past 6 years I have helped with fund raising, by organising two fun-day clay shooting events on the farm, and most recently, a raffle to raise funds for the hearing. I wanted to find out how people felt about the headrace canal on their land, so I undertook a phone survey of affected landowners. Murray and I have hosted untold visitors to the Valley who come to find out what the effects of the scheme would be upon the historic sites, the natural environment, the people living within the Valley and on the Valley in general.

4. If this scheme goes ahead, we would lose, according to the information in the 2005 report, 24% of one farm, and 60% of the other. I now find after reading Mr Lewthwaite's evidence, that we actually lose approximately 50% of one farm, and 90% of the other. I am only guessing at this amount, as once again we have had no formal notice of the change of area. The land lost would be the very best of each farm; the drought proof valley floors.
5. The Trust also owns three farms on the plains, all of which would lose land to distribution canals. Some of the land has been owned by the Robertson family since 1864. That is five generations of Robertson's who have farmed this land, with the sixth generation already taking an interest. By allowing this scheme to proceed, you would be depriving at least another four generations of what is their birthright.



**Harry and Jack Robertson, sixth generation.**

6. We love the Valley. It is extremely important to my family and I. The Valley is also enjoyed by artists, photographers, birdwatchers, walkers, cyclists and people searching for agates.



**Abners' Head in the lush Waianiwaniwa Valley, April 2008.**

7. In 1982 we decided that instead of putting irrigation on our 120 acre dry block, we would, for the same price, buy a 300 acre farm in the Malvern Hills. The land was virtually drought proof, and would allow us to graze our deer and goats all year round, and summer graze our sheep and cattle. It was close enough to walk our stock from the Plains farms to the hill block, (an 8 hour drove) thus saving transport costs. Our children, on their ponies, accompanied the stock on their journey to the hills; a popular sight with the tourists. We are always at hand to help cross main roads and fords, but most of the trip is on a direct route up the Auchenflower Road, some of which is grass road, all the rest shingle. Now our grandchildren are almost of an age to do this trip on their ponies. They have watched it from the cars since babies and are looking forward to their turn.



**Saddled up for the annual drove to the Valley.**



### **Droving in the Waianiwaniwa Valley.**

8. Our Plains blocks are intensively farmed, growing barley, peas, Chinese-cabbage, clover-seed, phacelia, grass-seed, carrot-seed etc in the summer and winter-feed in the autumn. We graze the sheep and cattle in the winter, and lamb over 2000 ewes in the spring. The ability to have the stock up in the hills for 8 months over summer makes all this possible. The loss of our Malvern Hills land would turn what is at present a well-rounded business, into a lop-sided struggling one. No one should have the right to take this from us, especially not a PRIVATE COMPANY.
9. I am not against irrigation at all. However, I am against this PRIVATE scheme, which is far too big, and therefore, far too expensive for the types of farming that the Central Canterbury Plains can sustain.
10. The lack of CPW's consultation with affected Waianiwaniwa Valley owners is abysmal. CPW seem to think that holding a meeting where they plug their scheme, but do not answer any questions, is consultation. Consultation is a two way process and this certainly has NOT been achieved by CPW. Sometimes they were downright rude and offensive when asked questions. Most times they would say "I don't know, I'll find out and get back to you." They never ever did.
11. I have heard these exact words from so many other affected landowners that it was obviously a company policy to answer all questions in this way. They would be deliberately obstructive when we tried to get information, and still are. To this day, we have never been sent a personalised letter informing us

that our land was required for the reservoir. They informed those landowners who would have the 50m canal running across their land but not us who will lose most of our land! We obviously don't matter.

12. At the hearing of consents when CPW presented its expert witnesses, I could not believe my ears when Ms Jamieson stated she had consulted with Valley landowners. The first time I ever saw Ms Jamieson was at that hearing; she has never made any attempt to meet us. When she left the room I followed her out to confront her. I asked her how she could have misled you, the Commissioners, with the statement she gave. She tried to bluff her way out of it, and promised to answer any questions I still had. It is too late now. I needed those answers before the designation was put on our properties. To say they are a 'clear and transparent company' that shows due regard to people is absolute rubbish.
13. Although some of the 12 questions I asked in my original submission have been asked by you, the Commissioners, there are others that have not been addressed. The following questions still remain unanswered.
14. The cost of land purchase and compensation is not given, so the price of the scheme cannot be finalised. How can farmers work out whether they can afford this scheme or not?
15. Why wasn't a survey of all farmers carried out to prove that this scheme was necessary? When the 2005 maps of the distribution canals came out, I decided to do a survey to sample the feelings of the farmers affected. I visited fifty affected landowners and found that all of them were against the scheme. I decided to try to get a hearing at the Selwyn District Council, but they were not interested. Selwyn District Council wanted any discussion left for these hearings. I marked all the farms opposed to the canals with orange highlighter and have all the paperwork to support it [present map and papers]. This shows the amount of opposition there is and I certainly did not get to speak to everyone.
16. Why haven't Selwyn District Council asked the ratepayers of Selwyn District for permission to take land from 27 Selwyn District Council Reserves and Parks?

17. To contend that there will not be any Nor'west winds in the Valley during the period that the reservoir is empty is wrong. From the time Mr. Lewthwaite stated this in March at the hearings, there have been many Nor'westers. Why hasn't Mr Lewthwaite studied the weather in our Valley? Once again he has been caught out saying what he thinks you want to hear, not the truth.
18. CPW continue to speak of the recreational value of the reservoir, of windsurfing and sailing in this Valley that has "no Nor'west winds". Kayaking? What? In this stinking hell hole? What would happen if kayakers fell in? Falling into this putrid water must be a health hazard, so please ask Mr. Lewthwaite where he thinks he will find people mad enough to do these activities?
19. It was stated at the hearings that the water coming out of the reservoir would not be toxic because they would be taking the water from the top of the reservoir. What happens when the water level gets down to the toxic level? I cannot see them stopping the flow when farmers are demanding the water. What guarantee have we, as consumers, got that none of that toxic water will be used to irrigate the food we eat? If the water is too toxic for animals to drink, would the dust from the dried area also be toxic? Is the stink a health hazard to us and our animals?
20. Why have there been no studies done on the effects of building a 2 km long dam the size of a 16 storey building, so close to Coalgate?
21. Why has no study on the slippage of the land in the reservoir ever been conducted?
22. Why has no study on the effect that more than doubling the number of dairy farms on the Plains to 46,000 ha, would have on the aquifers under the Plains and Christchurch? If the scheme covers 60,000 ha, of which 30,000 ha is already irrigated, does that mean that all the newly irrigated land would be dairy farms?
23. Why has no study on the changes in climate that could be brought about by this huge area of water, plus the canals even been done? What about the effect of losing all the shelterbelts on newly developed dairy farms?

24. Will stock water races be shut down because of the scheme? Most farms and some households rely on them.
25. We asked for the high water level to be marked on our farms in the Valley. Why was this not done?
26. How soon can the designation be taken off our LIM reports after the scheme is canned?
27. If, as they say, the water will be too toxic for animals to drink, will that mean that the grass and food crops that are irrigated with this water, will also be too toxic to eat?
28. There have been no studies on the following issues:
- a) The change of climate this huge reservoir and its numerous canals would bring about;
  - b) The mental, social, and financial effects, living under that huge dam, would have on Coalgate residents;
  - c) The erosion of the riparian strip, and up onto the farmland, caused by water-logging;
  - d) How the land would be de-valued by the stink, air-pollution (dust), fog and poor or no access to farmland;
  - e) The effect a huge increase in dairying would have on the quality and quantity of water in rivers, streams and aquifers of Central Canterbury; or
  - f) The effect of toxic and contaminated water on the Selwyn River and on Te Waihora/Lake Ellesmere.
29. Why have we had to wait until May 2007 before a study was done on how this scheme is presently affecting the Valley residents. The mental anguish we have suffered due to CPW's lack of consultation is unacceptable. I feel that we should all be compensated for it.
30. The Waianiwaniwa Valley has a pleasing population of the endangered Canterbury Mudfish. On our farm we have fenced a pond off and the population there has grown dramatically. With funds from Selwyn District Council's environmental enhancement programme, we are fencing off the Cairn Stream down to the road to allow for more habitats, and will plant it in natives. We already have rare native sedges growing around the pond.



**Mudfish habitat in Cairn Stream.**

31. The Waianiwaniwa Reservoir feasibility study, states in 2-1, that there is no evidence of major flooding. In the 26 years we have owned land in the Valley there have been 3 major floods with the water flooding over the 8 wire fences and one flooding over the handrails of the Malvern Hills road bridge. We produced photos of an extreme flood when we were fighting against having a dump in our valley. Ironically, Mr Morrison, Chairman of CPWL, was fighting WITH us at the time to save the Valley. He certainly cannot say he knew nothing about these floods. He also went into the Valley with his tractor in the 1960's to rescue Mrs Molly Townsend and her family from the floods. This was quite a regular occurrence. I would like you to watch a video that I made, interviewing Molly, who is 90 years old, but has a very clear memory of living in the Valley. [SHOW VIDEO]
32. In their application for consent CRC021091 + 2, CPW has asked to take all the water not used by, or allocated to any other consent holders. I firmly believe that that water should stay in the rivers. The aquifers need as much as they can get for re-charge. I
33. In CRC061817 they speak of the riparian margins of the Waianiwaniwa River; these are extremely fragile. Any heavy rainfall could cause landslides. Water logging from the reservoir would make it worse, resulting in more loss of land from the farms.
34. In CRC061767, and other consents, CPW applied for their consents to last for 35 years. It does not take 35 years to build a dam. CPW anticipate it will take 2-3 years. Their consents should only last for this time. In no way

should they be allowed to contaminate and pollute our environment beyond this time. Three years is a long time to allow contamination. 35 years is an environmental disaster.

35. The Waianiwaniwa River runs through a fertile valley and the land on both sides of it, the valley farms, are like jewels in the crown. Without this land, which produces feed all year round, is drought proof, and is equivalent to the best irrigated plains land, the farms are left with only the rocky tops of hills.

36. The Valley is of historic value. There is abundant evidence of the Maori occupation. James Clough, one our early Colonial settlers was most likely to have been the first white man to have walked the Canterbury Plains. Jimmy's Knob was named after him; Abner's Head and Abner's Pool were named after his son. The Deans family will no doubt tell their own story.



**Abner's Head summit.**

37. On our property we have a cottage which is over 140 years old. It has triple brick walls, kauri floors and doors showing the wonderful character of the colonial building of the time. My son Craig, his wife Sally, and their three children, Harry, Jack, and Emma make their home in this cottage. We also have a shearing shed that members of the Historical Society think may be the first shearing shed built in Canterbury. This is being looked into.

38. Our farm would lose our son's house, two shearing sheds (plus the old one), a hay shed, and three implement sheds, sheep and cattle yards, in fact all of

its infrastructure, all because a PRIVATE COMPANY wants its shareholders to make more money. This scheme sets farmer against farmer.

39. The Valley summers approximately 22,000 stock units. The reservoir covers 12 square km of land. The canal systems also cover approximately the same. For each hectare of land removed from farming, there has to be 4 hectares of newly irrigated land to have a status quo. That is a lot of land wasted, and they are not making any more of it.
40. In CRCO61870 and many others, CPW require permission to discharge various types of contaminants into the water, and onto the land. In all cases this would prove very detrimental. Toxic substances of course need no explaining; to allow it would be criminal. Dust and silt, however, do need explaining. They are both very bad for animals and humans. Silt in the water cuts out the sprinklers and pumps, and applies silt onto the pasture. This is detrimental for animal health. Flushing the settling ponds just above Darfield's community water intake, is unacceptable.
41. This irrigation scheme has been driven by dairy farmers who bought very dry Canterbury land for dairying (at dry land prices), and now find that the cost of power to irrigate is too high. It is also pushed by URS, the dam builder, which stands to make probably nearly a billion dollars out of the project. URS would not want other options looked at e.g. the Waimakariri Scheme. In this scheme, land was purchased for a reservoir, but this option proved to be too expensive, so now a lot of the farmers are putting in Turkey Nests (ponds) on their own land at the price of \$1.70 approx per cubic metre of water. South Canterbury farmers are doing the same, this being the cheapest option.
42. CPW did not look at Lees Valley, or at amending the Rakaia Conservation Order to allow the raising of Lake Coleridge back to its original height, and taking that water out before it reaches the river. Of course, URS would not like that, there would be no dam to build. This scheme is also pushed by big dairy consortiums that plan to make the Central Canterbury Plains one big dairy sewerage farm, dairying being the only type of farming that could afford the price of the water.
43. Finally, nowhere in the applications for consents is there one to take all the water of the Waianiwaniwa River for the purpose of irrigation. This water is necessary for Te Waihora/Lake Ellesmere. Ngai Tahu has stated that no

adverse effects to the lake would be tolerated. I think that is a statement that we must all agree with.

44. If this scheme goes ahead, the loss to my family and me would be immeasurable. We have worked hard all of our lives to be productive members of our community and see no reason why WE should have to sacrifice all of our efforts for dairy farming.

45. For all of the reasons I have outlined above and because of the lack of necessary environmental, financial, mental, and social reports, I ask for the Commissioners to withdraw the Notice of Requirement and decline all associated resource consent applications.

**Maureen Robertson  
Committee Member  
Malvern Hills Protection Society**