

IN THE MATTER OF

the Resource Management Act 1991

AND

IN THE MATTER OF

of resource consent applications by
various parties (**UWAG**) to irrigate land
in the upper Waitaki Catchment

TABLED AT HEARING

Date 5/10/2009

**Part 1: Supplementary General Landscape Evidence of Andrew William
Craig**

Andrew Craig Landscape Architect Ltd
PO Box 109
Christchurch 8140
Ph. 03 377 0157
Mob. 021 146 1092
andrew@acla.co.nz

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The evidence has been prepared in response to a question put by the Panel¹ asking what extent of landscape is covered by the 'Waitaki Catchment Water Allocation Regional Plan' (WCWARP).
- 1.2 The panel may recall that I believed the extent of the landscape as referred to in the Plan is confined to the surface, beds and margins of lakes and watercourses (streams and rivers). And that policy makes reference to landscape type as, for example, those with high natural character of which water bodies are a part. I also indicated that connectedness between waterbodies is to be considered with regard to a catchment as part of and within a particular landscape.
- 1.3 In the discussion to follow, I consider more closely what I consider to be the intent of the WCWARP with regard to landscape matters. In particular, I set out to determine whether the Plan is fundamentally focussed on water bodies, and or the wider landscape in which they are located.

2.0 CONSIDERATION OF LANDSCAPE MATTERS IN THE WCWARP

- 2.1 In terms of identifying the landscape covered are the following objectives and policies.
- 2.2 Objective 1 states;

To sustain the qualities of the environment of the Waitaki River and associated beds, banks, margins, tributaries, islands, lakes, wetlands and aquifers by:

(of relevance to landscape)

c. managing the water bodies in a way that maintains natural landscape and amenity characteristics and qualities that people appreciate and enjoy.

- 2.3 The landscape features listed in the first part of the objective clearly identify that water bodies and their margins, including islands, are of concern. The wider landscape setting is not referred to, nor implied. In order to achieve the first part of the objective with regard to landscape outcomes, we are asked to consider the matters under clause 'c' cited above. Again it is the 'water bodies' that are to be managed – not the wider landscape. But in so doing, their contribution to '*...the qualities of the environment...*' and '*...natural landscape...*' is acknowledged. So from this, I interpret it to mean that the water bodies, particularly those specifically identified in Policy 2, are an important component of the natural landscape. This is reinforced by Policy 29 which in referring to Policy 2 identifies that it is the '*...high natural character of water bodies...*' that are of concern. In the case of Policy 29, the cumulative effects of allocation are to be considered. As such the objective and supporting policies seek to maintain the natural character of the identified water bodies as just one, but nonetheless integral, part of the wider landscape. Or to put it another way, the natural landscape comprises a series of key landscape features - principally mountains, valleys, indigenous

¹ Question put in response to presentation of my Part 1 General Landscape Evidence – 6.10.2009

vegetation and water bodies. It appears the WCWARP is seeking to protect the natural character of these particular water bodies as one of a number of landscape components that go to make up the wider natural environment.

- 2.4 In support of the objectives, and by way of introducing a higher level of specificity, particular with regard Objective 1c, Policies 2, 30 and 31 identify certain water bodies as having, as the explanation to Policy 2 states;

'...high natural character worthy of a high level of protection, because they are either in largely unmodified parts of the catchment – an approach that recognises the physical, ecological, cultural and social connections throughout the catchment.'

By listing specific waterbodies, the focus is on them, although the character of their wider setting is recognised. That is, it is the water body that has high natural character that the policy is concerned with, although as discussed, this is in deference to that of its natural landscape setting. This is reinforced in the explanation to Policy 2 where it states that;

'This policy recognises that there are some parts of the catchment where the water bodies should be managed as far as possible to retain their high natural character and are, therefore, afforded a high level of protection in this Plan. This is consistent with provisions of the Canterbury Regional Policy Statement (Chapter 9 Policy 4) regarding the identification of any water bodies that should be sustained as far as possible in their natural state.'

- 2.5 Again it is clear from this explanation that it is the waterbodies themselves that are the object of policy focus rather than their wider landscape setting. That is, it is the water bodies that have to be managed; not the landscape in which they occur.

- 2.6 Policy 4 stresses this approach where it seeks consideration of

'... the following matters when setting environmental flow and level regimes.'

And of relevance to the landscape, these matters include *'natural character, landscape, visual amenity;'* but only when considering flow and level regimes.

- 2.7 Policy 12 appears to cast the net wider with regard to effects of allocation where there is a requirement to refer to the *'...relevant national, regional and local plans and strategies'* (sub-clause 'c'). Additionally of relevance to landscape outcomes, sub-clause 'f' requires consideration of *'...the relative environmental effects of the activities including effects on landscape....'* Thus the policy provides a route to consider wider landscape effects, namely via the relevant statutory documents. In my assessment I have focussed on the District Plans as the primary mechanism concerning the effects of land use (irrigation) on the landscape. I do so based on the assumption that where the Plans are operative, they will not be inconsistent with the objectives and policies of their regional counterparts.

- 2.8 Turning to the location specific policies (Policies 29ff) they all appear to require consideration of abstraction and allocation effects. These mostly concern minimum lake levels and environmental flow regimes, arising from the taking, usage, damming, and diversion of rivers and lakes.

2.9 Finally, the anticipated environmental results appear to concentrate on the landscape outcomes arising from water bodies only. Those relevant to these are as follows:

1. *There is a high level of awareness and recognition of the connectedness of the water bodies in the catchment – between the mountains and the sea, and between the components of the aquatic systems.*
2. *The High Natural Character Water Bodies retain their special features and characteristics.*
5. *Lakes Tekapo, Pukaki and Ohau and their catchments retain their mana and iconic status.*
6. *The landscape and amenity values of water bodies within the catchment are maintained or enhanced.*

3.0 CONCLUSION

3.1 While the WCWARP alludes to consideration of wider landscape effects, particularly in Policy 12, it appears to me that the bulk of the provisions focus on the water bodies. That is, when considered in the round, the weight of policy direction is most definitely in favour of waterbodies and their immediate environs. The Plan is however not blind to other relevant plans where their consideration is recognised and required. Thus the wider landscape effects are to be taken account of in accordance with the focus of each Plan. And collectively in so doing, all landscape matters will be considered.

Andrew Craig
Landscape Architect
7 October 2009