

Main Road,
Oturehua,
Central Otago 9339

3 December 2009

To the Panel hearing 110 applications for resource consents to take, use and discharge water in the Upper Waitaki Catchment.

1. My name is Brian Lindsay Turner. I am a writer and poet. I was born in Dunedin in 1944 and for most of my life I have lived in Otago.
2. I see myself as a committed southern New Zealander who, from an early age, has spent most of his spare time in the outdoors, fishing, sailing, cycling, hunting, and mountaineering, when I've not been playing cricket, hockey, golf, or running with harriers. All of this has instilled in me a deep attachment to and familiarity with the hills and valleys, rivers and lakes and forests of the south. I would argue that I know this place – our place – better than most.
3. I am the author of about 20 books, and my poetry and prose has appeared in at least that number of anthologies here and elsewhere. My works include ten volumes of poetry, one of which, *Beyond*, won the NZ Book Award for Poetry in 1993. Four of the other nine volumes were shortlisted for that annual NZ poetry award. My first volume, published in 1978, was joint winner of the Commonwealth Poetry Award. I was Robert Burns Fellow at the University of Otago in 1984; I was awarded a Scholarship in Letters in 1993, and was Writer in Residence at the University of Canterbury in 1997. I was the Te Mata estate NZ Poet Laureate from 2003-2005. In 2009 I received The Prime Minister's Award for Literary Achievement in Poetry and the Lauris Edmond Memorial Award for Poetry. Many years ago a critic termed me the "quintessential Otago poet of his day". My memoir *Somebodies and Nobodies*, about growing up in a famous New Zealand sporting family, was published in 2002. I am known for my columns, biographies and essays on outdoor issues, environmental issues, and sport and recreation, among other things. A collection of my essays on environmental issues and outdoor recreation, *Into the Wider World*, was shortlisted for the 2008-9 Montana New Zealand Book Awards.
4. My familiarity with the Mackenzie Country dates from the 1950s when our family began visiting it at holiday times. We camped and fished the rivers and lakes and streams; we wandered, we reflected, we marvelled at the place. We gazed in awe at the alps, at peaks including Cook/Aorangi which, years later, I climbed.

5. The landscape of the Mackenzie, its flora and fauna, was distinctive. It wasn't 'manicured'; it was austere, in places stark and startling. It had yet to succumb to our unthinking and irresponsible urge to mess with and alter and control nature in ways that, in the long run, decrease and limit biodiversity and destroy intrinsic values.
6. Further intensive farming activities of the kind proposed for the Mackenzie are short-sighted. They amount to violation and desecration.
7. I wrote about aspects of the Mackenzie and of my love for it in my book *Somebodies and Nobodies: Growing Up in an Extraordinary Sporting Family* (Random House, 2002), and in my best-selling *Into the Wider World* (Random, 2008).
8. Our future as a species depends on a willingness to see nature as a community to which we belong rather than a commodity, and to limit the extent to which we overload it artificially. This means accepting and insisting that nurturing bio-diversity, what the great forester and conservator Aldo Leopold termed the 'biotic community', is a benefit not a cost to human society.
9. Leopold wrote that something is right when it tends 'to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community' and 'wrong when it tends otherwise'.
10. We continue to take more from nature than we give. The balance is quite wrong. By continuing to degrade our habitats we degrade ourselves. I am speaking here of our crying need to embrace what the philosopher Kathleen Dean Moore calls an 'ecological ethic of care', a 'moral ecology' which extends to more than humans, an ethic which has to include land and water, landscapes and all other living things.
11. There are limits to what we can do anywhere on earth and maintain the integrity and essence of a place. In New Zealand we continue to be hell bent on squandering our environmental inheritance. Turning the Mackenzie country into the sort of country nature never intended it to be – and nature does know better than we do – is to engage in a grossly destructive and unsustainable act. As the writer Edward Abbey's observed, growth for growth's sake is the ideology of the cancer cell.
12. Many in our society tend to regard change and progress as one and the same, synonyms almost. They are not. I regularly meet people who insist that 'unless we're going forward we'll go backwards', and 'there is no alternative' to what is being proposed. My heart and soul wilts at that sort of ill-considered, trite, unimaginative utterance, and then I recall G K Chesterton's view that, *The fatal metaphor of progress, which means leaving things behind us, has utterly obscured the real idea of growth, which means leaving things inside us.*

13. I implore you to carefully consider, 'How much human-induced change can a place stand before it loses its essence? Is it not time to accept that the least-altered landscapes everywhere are now the most valuable of all?'

Brian Turner