

BEFORE THE BAY OF PLENTY REGIONAL COUNCIL

UNDER the Resource Management Act 1991

AND

IN THE MATTER OF resource consent applications by the Western Bay of Plenty District Council for the continued operation of, and discharge of treated wastewater from, the Te Puke Wastewater Treatment Plant.

**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF ELVA PATRICIA CONROY
ON BEHALF OF THE MAKAHAE MARAE COMMITTEE (NGĀTI TUHEKE HAPŪ)**

4 APRIL 2019

Introduction

1. He uri tenei nō te waka o Te Arawa. Ko Tapuika te Iwi. Ko Waiari me Kaituna ngā awa. Ko Te Kahika te Pā Tawhito. Ko Ngāti Tuheke te hapū. Ko Makahae te Marae. Ko Makahae te tangata.
2. My name is Elva Patricia Conroy. I am the secretary of the Makahae Marae Committee and member of Ngāti Tuheke, a hapū of Tapuika. While I am a qualified planner, I am not appearing today as an expert, giving planning evidence. However, as a planner I acknowledge that I have some expertise and knowledge that I have used in preparing this evidence – but reiterate that this is not expert evidence.
3. I wish to acknowledge the submissions from our whanau of Tawakepito Marae and Moko Marae; from individual Tapuika submitters and as well as from the Tapuika Iwi Authority. To adapt a well known saying “Ko mātou te awa, ko te awa ko mātou” (we are the river and the river is us).

Scope of evidence

4. My evidence will cover the following:
 - a. Our connection to our awa.
 - b. Our position in relation to the consent application.
 - c. Our position in relation to key topics.

Our connection to our awa

5. Our marae is located just east of Te Puke on Te Kahika Road, a road which is named after the traditional Pā (Te Kahika) on which our marae is located. Our marae and Pā overlook the Waiari Stream just upstream of the site, to which the application relates.



6. Our people have resided in the area since the 1650's. This is evident in the numerous pā and maara kai (food producing areas) within the vicinity of the Waiari Stream. The Waiari provided access via waka from Maketū to Te Puke Township, with the landing place located at the foot of Te Kahika pā. It is here that Ngāti Tuheke brought the first Europeans to Te Puke. This place is of special significance, for it represents the gateway through which the Waiari was accessed.
7. It goes without saying that the Waiari Stream is a taonga of great significance to us. This is evident in our oratory, customs, genealogy, proverbs and songs. It is evident in our pepeha, the way in which introduce ourselves. It is a source of our tribal identity. We have an inherent responsibility to safeguard and ensure the care of our awa.

Our position in relation to the consent application

8. As noted in our submission, we neither oppose nor support the application. This is because the application comprises multiple activities, many of which are not a concern. These include the air discharge; modification of the riparian wetland; and, the temporary discharge of sediment during the installation of the diffuser pipe and rock chamber.
9. Regardless of the degree of treatment, the notion of discharging human waste to our awa remains abhorrent. As such, we will always – in principle - oppose the discharge of treated wastewater to water.
10. We do however, acknowledge that the wastewater treatment plant is critical infrastructure for the Te Puke township and community and that the applicant is taking steps to:
 - a. identify and make improvements to the treatment system to ensure the plant continues to operate effectively.
 - b. make improvements to the existing method of discharge.
 - c. exploring the feasibility of alternative disposal methods and locations.
11. There are three matters within our submission that we would like to discuss further. These are tangata whenua involvement; consent duration; and cultural monitoring.

Tangata Whenua Involvement

12. We support all draft consent conditions which provide for tangata whenua involvement in particular, Condition 14 which relates to the establishment of the Kaitiaki Advisory Group. This mirrors the approach taken for the joint resource consent for the new Waiari Water Supply.
13. I have no concerns about the wording of Condition 14 or the definition of the Kaitiaki Advisory Group in the Advice Note. I would strongly suggest that – in practice – the existing Waiari Kaitiaki Advisory Group be used. While this group was established as a condition of another resource consent, there is no reason why this group could not fulfil the conditions of both the water supply and wastewater consents. Regardless of the consent, our people are there for the awa. Utilising the Waiari Kaitiaki Advisory Group is an efficient use of time for our people, who are already stretched with consultation hui and advisory group or forum meetings. It also creates administration and cost efficiencies for Council by holding regular meetings for both permits with the same people.
14. Relief sought: Retain wording of Condition 14. Council and Tauranga City Council to work through the logistics and administration efficiencies associated with a single Kaitiaki Advisory Group for the Waiari Stream (irrespective of the resource consent/s).
15. Draft Condition 15.9 outlines annual reporting to Te Maru o Kaituna River Authority, a co-governance entity with Tapuika representation. In my personal opinion, Te Maru o Kaituna has a greater role to play beyond receiving annual reports. For example, Te Maru o Kaituna representation on the Wastewater Advisory Group would ensure greater connectivity in giving effect to the Vision of the Kaituna River Document. Specific projects being scoped by Te Maru o Kaituna at the moment include the creation of additional wetlands, downstream of the discharge point, and the creation and enhancement of habitat for tuna (eel) and inanga (whitebait).
16. Relief sought: For the reasons outlined above, Draft Condition 16.2 should be amended to include a representative from Te Maru o Kaituna to the Wastewater Advisory Group.

Consent duration

17. Our submission opposed a consent term of 35 years and instead suggested a 20 year consent term to coincide with the completion of the Alternative Option Scheme Selection work (2026). This position remains unchanged even after reading the staff recommendation report; the provision of additional information and the hearing evidence.
18. I acknowledge that a 35 year consent term provides certain for Council and its ratepayers. However, it provides us with little certainty that the stages within the Alternative Option Scheme Selection work will be completed without delay. Council priorities generally shift every three years in relation to Long Term Plan funding priorities as well as local body elections and associated priorities of elected members. Priorities can also shift within a year in response to unexpected events such as emergency response (flooding). For this reason, we are concerned that a 35 year consent removes the urgency to get the work completed.
19. Relief sought: 20 year consent term, as per our submission.

Cultural Monitoring

20. Our submission sought the use of mātauranga-based tools to measure and monitor the cultural impact of the discharge. Cultural monitoring is a way of measuring and monitoring the health of our awa but using indicators that are meaningful to us.
21. A similar scenario is the use of ecological monitoring to understand the extent to which a wastewater discharge is impacting instream life. According to Draft Condition 9.8, this will occur on commencement of the consent and every five years. The specific methodology will be provided to Council beforehand and approved by an ecologist.
22. There is no specific requirement for cultural monitoring within Draft Consent Condition 9, which outlines specific discharge and receiving water monitoring requirements. The only reference is within Condition 10.3(c)(4) which seeks to ensure that Tangata Whenua have the opportunity to be involved in monitoring. However, this is only linked to a Remedial Action Plan i.e. when monitoring indicates that discharge limits have been breached.

23. In my view, this is neither proactive nor gives due recognition to the role of mātauranga Māori and cultural indicators in the same vein as biochemical or ecological indicators. Instead there is a reliance on the Kaitiaki Advisory Group to consider and discuss the outcomes of monitoring; and inform or make recommendations to the consent holder – which is appropriate – however there is no specific obligation by the consent holder to, for example, cultural monitoring in the absence of a consent condition.
24. Relief sought: A specific condition relating to cultural monitoring, written similar to Condition 9.8. It is important to note that cultural monitoring is a specific condition within the joint TCC/WBOPDC resource consent for the new Waiari Water Supply. The specific methodology is already in development by the Waiari Kaitiaki Advisory Group.

Name: Elva Conroy

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