

**BEFORE COMMISSIONERS APPOINTED
BY THE WAIKATO REGIONAL COUNCIL**

IN THE MATTER of the Resource Management Act 1991

AND

IN THE MATTER of the First Schedule to the Act

AND

IN THE MATTER of Waikato Regional Plan Change 1- Waikato
and Waipā River Catchments and Variation 1
to Plan Change 1

AND

IN THE MATTER of submissions under clause 6 First Schedule

BY **FARMERS 4 POSITIVE CHANGE**
Submitter

HEARING STATEMENT OF KIMBER RICHMOND BURKE
4 September 2019

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BACKGROUND AND EXPERIENCE

1. My full name is Kimber Richmond (Rick) Burke.
2. I have been farming beef cattle, dairy grazers and sheep in Lund Road, Katikati for 35 years.
3. I am currently Chairman of Farmers For Positive Change (F4PC).
4. I am a member of the Beef + Lamb Mid Northern North Island Farmer Council, of which I was Chairman for 3 years. I have actively promoted farmers carrying out Farm Environment Plans and other environmental initiatives whilst on the Farmer Council.
5. I provided a hearing statement for F4PC as part of its case on the hearing streams Block 1 & 2. In my HS1 statement, dated 4 March 2019, I set out my relevant experience, farming background, and agricultural affiliations. I confirm those details remain current.

INTRODUCTION

6. F4PC have been a strong advocate of Sub-Catchment (SC) initiatives as the vehicle to accelerate the process of the improvement of Fresh Water in the Waikato. There are many successes popping up around New Zealand in the freshwater story. These are largely driven by SC Groups. Examples of far-reaching national or regional collaborations between farmers, industry, government and conservation interests that find common ground and achieve break-through consensus - of regional councils working effectively with local farmers through packages of incentives and regulation - of research institutes sharing science with community Sub-Catchment groups and so enhancing outcomes - of local farmers meeting in kitchens to discuss land management for the river they share, and of landowners, farm by farm, applying the best of their knowledge and experience to improve the environmental quality of their land and water.
7. In my Submission I aim to give you as the Commissioners some guidance as to how to design policy framework within PC1 to incentivise the improvement in fresh water quality through a SC concept. I will talk specifically about a SC Group I'm involved with called Project Parore which is located in the Te Mania Catchment within the Bay of Plenty region.

WHAT CONSTITUTES A SUB-CATCHMENT GROUP?

8. The draft proposed plan change prioritises the 74 sub-catchments in the Waikato and Waipa river catchments for Farm Environment Plans and stock exclusion. These SC vary hugely in size from the upper, middle and lower river reach consisting of 1st order to 4th order streams.
9. Since PC1 was notified in October 2016, there has been a proliferation of SC Groups formed. They were formed because Regulation was coming and farming communities wanted to and needed to get ahead of the game. These SC initiatives have been mainly driven by the hill country sheep and beef farmers supported and promoted by F4PC, B+LNZ, and DINZ working with WRC Land Management Officers.
10. What has been noticeable is that the boundaries and size of the SC are determined by the local community and its connection to the tributaries and local streams contained within. Also the knowledge of the local natural

resources, past history and associated cultures, wildlife flora, fauna and the health of its fresh water. The SC Groups in most cases will be only part of a whole SC. F4PC are calling these SC Hubs.

ENVIRONMENTAL FORENSICS - The WHY!

11. Learnings from successful SC initiatives throughout NZ suggests the way to engage farmers and their communities is to firstly stock take the Natural Resources within a SC Hub. Secondly a health check is performed on the Natural Resources using **Environmental Forensics**.
12. The key here is Community engagement and buy-in, with farming and Community leaders making the whole Community aware of the Environmental Forensic process!
13. Environmental Forensics should comprise of strategic testing of tributaries and streams within the SC Hub for nutrient, sediment ecoli levels, also invertebrate and fish health. Results can be compared with NPS standards and or local collected in-stream monitoring data. Environmental Forensics may also include a health check on bird counts and flora and fauna.
14. As mentioned in (12) above the key to engage farmers and their communities in the process is to present them with the findings from the Environmental Forensic analysis of their SC Hub. **They then begin to understand the WHY!** This becomes a real talking point in the local community about the health of their fresh water and ecosystem!
15. Farmers and their communities will become engaged once they are made aware of the issues in their SC Hubs. Farmers generally think that they are good custodians of the land, if they are made aware of the fact that some of their farming practices are causing environmental harm, they will seek solutions to fix the problem.
16. Farmers will look to educate themselves about the tools available to improve water quality and ecosystem health, the WRC has an important role to play in the process by working with industry to help provide some of the support tools to the farming community including funding by way of subsidies to high priority environmental protection work.

The B+LNZ Land Environment Plan

17. The Waikato is facing unique challenges with land use and water quality. The Waikato Regional Plan aims to address these, with Farm Environment Plans (FEP) as its greatest potential tool for implementing the rules and achieving the objectives set by the plan. A Beef + Lamb New Zealand LEP allows farmers to tailor responses and timeframes to their individual businesses. These can be managed one step at a time. Continuous improvement is key and more realistic than expecting everything to be done in one year.
18. The Beef + Lamb New Zealand LEP is intended to be a living document which is reviewed and updated annually to reflect changes in the business, new risks, and account for actions to manage risks in the previous year. It is intended that this document will help meet farmers' requirements under the Waikato Regional Plan, and provide a useful tool for farmers to manage their resources using good practice guidelines.
19. F4PC believe the WRC should support, incentivise and promote the B+LNZ LEP3 (industry Plan) ahead of the WRC FEP. F4PC believe the B+LNZ LEP3 is the 'Gold Standard' of all environment plans as it can be tailored to individual farms/landscapes using LUC principles. A farm can be broken into Land Management Units (LMU) which creates a significant opportunity for the farmer to ultimately improve profitability.
20. F4PC believe the WRC has the opportunity to use their resources efficiently by score carding farmers on how they are progressing re: addressing the environmental issues on their farms.
21. For example if a farmer has completed a B+LNZ LEP3 would score top of the range. If the farmer had a comprehensive 5year works programme he would also score top of the range and if he could produce evidence (photos) of work done and it was of high quality he would also score well. Therefore he would score in the top range and would only need to be audited every 5-7 years.

22. This would allow the WRC to put farmers through a drafting gate enabling the WRC to channel resources to those farmers who needed help or who were just plain 'non compliant'.
23. I would suggest leading farmers within a SC would assist the WRC in helping those farmers who were lagging behind in addressing their environmental issues, this is a strategy being used in Project Parore.0
24. I refer you to HS2 Submissions provided on behalf of F4PC by Bob Thompson and Rob McNab in regards to Land Environment Plans which I fully endorse. The B+LNZ Land Environment Plan (LEP) Level 2-3 is an excellent tool for farmers to use.

Drivers For Change

25. F4PC have consistently promoted that policy frameworks should create a positive culture of industry sectors and farming communities working together to drive change.
26. Waikato Healthy Rivers PC1 in its current form has failed to galvanise the agricultural sectors to embark on a journey to achieve the Vision and Strategy. Extensive farming systems are locked down to offset the environmental impact of intensive farming. This has created 'winners and losers'.
27. In the Waikato, low N leaching farmers have woken up to the devastating effects grandparenting N will have on their farming business's and communities along with the negative environmental outcomes.
28. Grandparenting has driven an unhealthy wedge between dairy and drystock sectors when in fact we should be all working together, taking a 'Team Approach' to the challenges ahead as outlined below in Project Parore.
29. PC1 needs to be tipped on its head and redesigned to create a culture of empowerment to achieve the Vision and Strategy. The policy framework within PC1 needs to attract science and innovation to meet future targets. It needs to allow for flexibility and transition periods that are achievable where sectors and farming communities work together to achieve their community aspirations and ultimately the Vision and Strategy.

30. The drivers for change are very real in the farming community, they are in the form of the tensions around the Regulation that's coming from Central Government, expectations and competition (alternative proteins) from the market place and social licence.
31. Although all this seems like an enormous challenge for many farmers in fact these Tensions can be also been seen as an opportunity not only to drive change but also take many farms to the next stage of development.
32. At a Sub-catchment scale F4PC see this as a future opportunity for farmers to self Regulate, be environmentally sustainable, improve profitability and bring communities closer together providing real health and well being benefits.
33. Introducing Project Parore, which aims to demonstrate what success looks like by building a framework around a Sub-catchment initiative aiming to create a positive culture with industry sectors and farming communities working together to drive change.



34. **'Project Parore'** is an community based environmental restoration project covering 4 water catchments flowing from the DOC Estate in the Kaimai Range into the northern Tauranga Harbour near Katikati.

35. The project has derived its name from the native Parore fish that used to be found in abundance around the estuaries within the harbour. Unfortunately progressive destruction of their habitat has occurred through build-up of sediment within the estuary mouths at the bottom of these catchments due to soil erosion runoff from farmland and along stream banks.

36. Previously the herbivore Parore used to graze and contain algal sea lettuce however breaking of the food chain through their absence, coupled with increased nutrient from fertilizer runoff has resulted in sea lettuce proliferation which has now become a major harbour nuisance.

37. The key indicator for success of this project will be that the Parore habitat is restored and as a result sea lettuce is contained.

38. Scoping and preparation of the plan has been carried out by 5 community members and a land management officer from BOPRC (who are strongly supporting the initiative). Project planning discipline supported by good governance and organization resources is has been a key focus in the establishment of the project which is envisaged will:

- Run over a long time frame
- Involve a number of different parties, organisations & disciplines
- Require community buy-in and support
- Have ongoing funding requirements

39. The initial focus has been on Te Mania catchment where preliminary scoping and plan preparation has been completed with the official community commitment and launch date scheduled for late October 2019.

40. This has included an engagement process involving an initial presentation to Te Mania community in October 2018 and follow up workshops with land owners. Beef & Lamb, DairyNZ, NZ Avocado & Zespri have also committed their joint support to the project under a MOU – a NZ first.

41. Water quality improvement is to be based upon adoption of Good Management Practice (GMP) by land owners. GMP is a pan-industry document developed in 2015 for use originally in Canterbury but intended to be applicable across all regions of NZ. GMP will be customised to deal with

Te Mania Catchment issues with farmers & orchardists preparing environmental plans incorporating:

- Identifying contamination sources & pathways.
- Assessment of land use specific risks to water quality based on LUC.
- Application of an appropriate management & remedial works program.
- Planning and recording timeline based actions with scheduled reviews.

42. A common sense approach will be taken to mobilise land owners into action – most issues can be easily identified. On the ground discussion groups utilising champion farmers will assist understanding of stream health issues, identification of critical source areas (CSA's) and best practice remedial actions.

43. Resources will be available to provide individual farmer/orchardist assistance & advice for environment planning & mapping, land retirement know how and access to contractors & services, retirement funding (BOPRC, Billion Trees Fund, other), carbon farming and Emission Trading Scheme, native flora & fauna enhancement – knowledge & resources.

44. **Baseline measurements:** This has been completed for Te Mania relating to stream health (including fish & invertebrates), flora and fauna.

45. **Environmental Forensics:** Two years of strategic in stream sampling relating to nutrient, ecoli and sediment levels have now provided a good understanding of what issues need to be addressed and priority areas for action.

46. **Environmental restoration work-streams:** We believe this is a very effective way to get community engagement to drive change. Work-streams are under way providing an opportunity for community involvement by involving volunteers and school students, which will help bridge the gap between urban and rural.

47. **Work streams include:** - Native Bush Protection and Restoration - Pest Animal Control (including biosecurity measures) - Pest Plant Control (including biosecurity measures) - Native Fish Habitat & Passageway Restoration - Estuarine Habitat Enhancement.

48. MFE have approved \$250,000 funding for the project which will be matched with an equivalent amount from BOPRC. Once the plan is officially launched in Te Mania we will replicate the template in in the other 3 catchments in the Katikati rohe.
49. **Note:** Some landowners are already carrying out waterway protection and other environmental works in these other catchments which will be further enhanced under Te Mania template. Getting work successfully up and running in Te Mania will also provide a showcase for landowners in these catchments.

The following map above identifies the four catchments that flow into the Tauranga Harbour near Katikati.



50. A long term objective of Project Parore is for the project template to be adopted by all 17 catchments feeding the Tauranga Harbour. This makes sense as the freshwater and estuarine issues faced by each catchment are essentially the same.

Conclusion:

51. F4PC believe that the WRC have a significant opportunity to go faster with the improvement of water quality by incentivising and supporting SC initiatives. Empowering SC Communities to improve water quality will achieve meaningful action on the ground rather than a focus on draconian one size fits all rules, which to date within PC1 has done nothing but put enormous stress on farming families, their communities and divided the sectors.
52. **‘Stronger Together’**: SC initiatives can create the vehicle for sectors and Industry Good Bodies to work together alongside the WRC to support, educate and provide tools to drive meaningful improvement in ecosystem health.
53. SC initiatives will provide the WRC with an opportunity to use and manage their resources more efficiently by working with a large collective of the farming community rather than individual farmers.
54. Working with farmers within SC will also give the WRC the opportunity to ‘score card’ farmers on how advanced they are with their LEP/FEP and works programme, channeling resources to the farmers that need help or who are non compliant.
55. Leading farmers within a SC maybe able to assist the WRC to get the farmers lagging behind on board.
56. **Environmental Forensics** is a key first step within a SC to firstly understand the issues which maybe unique to that particular SC and secondly to engage the stakeholders. Farmers are proud people. Almost all farmers want to demonstrate that they are good custodians of the land. Once farmers understand what the issues are within their landscapes they will want to know how to address them.
57. As outlined in Project Parore, SC Groups need to be structured well with good governance to ensure that they have longevity. SC Groups need to be recognised as a legal entity not only to source funding but also to provide the framework to lead and drive change. This is vitally important as it provides confidence to the Regional Council and other associated stakeholders.

58. There is nothing more powerful than a SC community taking ownership of water quality issues within their Rohe. The stakeholders within a SC have the ability to set short term and long term objectives and develop the strategy to achieve those objectives alongside Regional Council, setting the guidelines and targets to aim for.
59. This is a bottom-up approach 'carrot first' and it has been proven around the world as the best way to create a positive culture within communities to address water quality issues. Empowering the stakeholders within a SC will create the necessary peer pressure to ensure the majority get involved in addressing the issues through their farm plans. A culture of **'farmers wanting to not having to'**
60. There will be farmers for one reason or another who don't want to be part of a SC group, but will be addressing the issues on their farm through their Farm Plan. The WRC should have no problem with that!
61. The regulatory 'stick' should be directed to those who aren't addressing their farm contaminant loss, don't want to be part of the solution and who think business as usual is okay!
62. F4PC vision of success is farmers and their communities taking control of their own destiny driven by Sub-Catchment initiatives. Improving water quality/ecosystem health will take time.
63. F4PC see 2050 as a time frame, where farmers and members of a SC community can all look through a lens and see a 'mosaic of land use' where 'Farming Fits the Land', have strong vibrant communities who have met our targets and are working within their ecosystem health limits.

Dated this 4th September 2019

Rick Burke - Chairman Farmers 4 Positive Change