Bob Anker

Speaking Notes

Good morning Commissioners.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

You will be aware that the Rural Community has made over 100 submissions in respect of proposals relating to the Mangaroa and the Akatarawa Valley catchments. As such we will be presenting for Hearing Stream 3.

As a community we were already concerned at the massive amounts of material that needed to be read in order to understand what is occurring that directly and indirectly impacts on us and our neighbours. The report, by the Commissioners for the Regional Policy Statement, was made available to us some 6 days prior to a Greater Wellington Regional Council meeting that proposed to adopt the report. One thousand four hundred and sixteen pages. The timeframe was totally unrealistic with no allowance made for the amount of time needed to absorb this volume of information.

We are now moving on to the Natural Resources Plan. My prime concern was to educate myself and understand what parts of this are of material concern to myself and our community. I posed that question to “Friends of Submitter” and got no response – so I started to read the only thing available which was the material commencing with the section 42a report – and then realised that I was going to have to plough through another one thousand four hundred odd pages.

Section 42a report has a constant theme that demonstrates an overriding expectation that submitters will possess the technical ability to express in detailed terms the action that needs to be taken to deal with a problem that they have identified. Submitters are generally not lawyers or engineers or architects. The line being adopted is that the submitter needs to give detailed and itemised action plans to implement their ideas. It is not our purview, as lay people, to provide the level of detail that the 42a author appears to expect as of right. It is, however, our right to be treated with respect and not be patronised.

The following is an extract from the Section 42a report.

192. I agree with John Hill 84 that legislation or council directions should be clear and precise. The submitter has not provided reference to specific provisions where more clarity and preciseness is required, and on this basis, I provide no recommendation, noting that amendments to specific provisions are possible through the course of the hearings process.

For a lay person, just taking part in this process is a major commitment of time and mental energy. In presenting to the Commissioners for the Regional Policy Statement, those of us making personal presentations were treated with a high level of respect and consideration. Allowances were made for the fact that we were not professional planners and we were made to feel that our thoughts were welcomed.

Whilst not necessarily being professionally qualified, we bring to the process practical Lived Experience.

8.16 Issue 15: Miscellaneous comments 8.16.1 Analysis

It would appear that Mary O’Callahan has not had a great deal of exposure to the overall requirements placed on landowners in respect of water that enters their land from upstream.

We are somewhat at a loss to comprehend how an individual at this level can make the statement that ‘I cannot see a way to create a rule that requires someone to do something, in this case, to respond to a natural activity.’ The writer then refers the submitter to a GWRC publication. I must question whether Mary O’Callahan actually bothered to read it herself as the following extract from the first page of the document indicates.

 – quote –

**Watercourses and you : a landowner’s guide.**

**As a landowner, you are generally responsible for normal maintenance of watercourses on and around your property. This includes maintaining the watercourse free from obstruction so that water can drain away quickly. For example, removal of fallen trees blocking a stream.**

– unquote.

Who is Mary O’Callahan??? The impression that I have is that she is a paid consultant – if that is the fact of the matter I consider that we, as ratepayers, have a right to expect that her work would at least be fact checked before publication. The implication is that the statements that she makes are at least endorsed by GWRC.

Mary O’Callahan writes :

Section 42a Report : 258. On this basis I recommend rejecting the relief sought as it is not practical to manage the issue of naturally fallen trees in waterways and trees growing in a way that causes obstruction and consequential sedimentation through water quality regulation.

I only read the section 42a report in case it had relevance to our submissions in respect of the Mangaroa Valley area and the Akatarawa Valley. Instead of confining herself to “Overarching Matters” the 42a author has produced a dissertation covering the entirety of the submissions made for the NRP . In doing so she has drafted a completely erroneous response which calls in to question whether it is appropriate for her to be the author of the section 42a report in the first place?

The Commissioners who heard submissions relative to the Regional Policy Statement made a number of recommendations which GWRC appear to have disregarded. These recommendations can be found on the following pages of the report adopted by the September meeting of the GWRC held at Masterton.

Page 568

3.1.1.3

Community Engagements

Comment made on the importance of consulting with **all** communities in the Region.

Page 594

3.7.3

Objective A - Anticipated Environmental Results

Reads . . . . and consider the views of communities in resource management and decision making.

It appears to us that GWRC believe that they have done all that they need to do in respect of consultation. Consultation needs to be an active process, not a passive one on the part of GWRC. They are relying on the community at large having been fully aware of the Whaitua and their deliberations but have done nothing to ensure that such a state of awareness exists. GWRC considers that it is sufficient to place something on their website and place the onus on the general populace to seek the information out.

A common theme throughout the community submissions is that they were predominantly blindsided by the GWRC proposals and only found out through the actions of a small number of individuals within their community raising the alarm.

It is our opinion that the entire process is too unwieldy and cannot keep up with the pace of change. NPS – HPL and NPS – IB are still being debated after they have already been scrapped.

Government have given a crystal clear signal that NPS – FM will be radically changed and have taken the step of instructing Otago not to notify their plan pending forthcoming changes to NPS – FM and yet GWRC consider it appropriate to continue unchecked.

Thank you for listening to our concerns.

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