

**BEFORE THE BOARD OF INQUIRY**

**IN THE MATTER** of the Resource Management Act 1991

**AND**

**IN THE MATTER** of applications by Contact Energy Limited for resource consents and notices of requirement for the Hauāuru mā raki Wind Farm Proposal

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**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE**

**STEPHEN RICHARD MARKHAM**

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## INTRODUCTION

1. My name is Stephen Richard Markham. I am married to Janet Elizabeth Markham. We are dairy and beef farmers in Pukekawa. We have five farms which are owned by the Stephen and Janet Markham Family Trusts. I have lived and farmed in the Opuatia and Pukekawa areas for 30 years. Over these years we have built our farming business up and always trying to add value to it. We now farm just over 1000 acres.
2. I have a New Zealand Trade Certificate in Farming from the NZ Trade Certificate Board. I also won the Don Thompson cup from Waikato Federated Farmers Farm Cadet Scheme for the highest aggregate points, which was for the most practical farm cadet in 1976.
3. I am giving evidence to strongly oppose the planned route of the pylons from State Highway 22 which Contact want to put through one of my properties at 1417 Highway 22 to the Lines Care property and to ask that they be moved.
4. Contact Energy want to cross our property with its wires. Pylons are planned for farms on each side of my property that is the Middleton and Lines - Care properties. No pylons would be on my property. A major part of my property is next to Eric Allan and Elizabeth Wright's property at 1441 SH 22 Opuatia.
5. I oppose the proposed route for the for the following reasons:
  - a) I currently share the use of an airstrip with Eric and Elizabeth. The top of the airstrip and the fertiliser storage bin is on my property and most of the strip is on theirs. This airstrip is used to load topdressing planes, which apply fertiliser to that property and the steeper terrain on several of my nearby farms. The transmission line would make the airstrip unusable, as wires would run across the flight path used by planes to take off and land. Safety is paramount to me and I would not ask any pilot to endanger their lives by trying to negotiate a network of live power lines.
  - b) My daughter Adele also leases a farm which boundaries my farm and Elizabeth and Eric's. She also uses our airstrip to topdress her leased farm. If the transmission line was to proceed along its current path, it would also hinder her ability to control weeds on the property. It would prevent the aerial application of weed spray by planes using my airstrip. This would also affect my property.

- c) I have been neighbours with Elizabeth and Eric since April 1986. Over the years we have worked closely together, often sharing the facilities on each other's farms. We have developed a good working relationship and this has ensured there have never been arguments or disagreements about the sharing of our farm facilities.
- d) I know Contact Energy has said that we could share an airstrip on another farm located 7kms away at 401 Otuiti Road. To farm effectively and efficiently I need to be able to apply fertiliser when needed. I would also no longer be able to buy fertiliser and store it in the bin at the top of my airstrip. With the present set up I simply need to make one phone call to Eric or Elizabeth and I can then book the fertiliser and the plane.
- e) In addition, the airstrip Contact Energy intends us to use is further away, meaning a longer flying time for aircraft spreading fertiliser. It's also a lot further for me to drive from my farms to make sure the fertiliser has been delivered and everything is ready for the pilot. If it's raining it's also a lot further for me to go to make sure that the fertiliser is covered and that there are no problems. The fact that there are going to be a lot more people involved and using this alternative airstrip, raises a number of concerns. For example, who would be responsible for the maintenance of the airstrip and who would decide who gets to use the airstrip and when? It's a bit like having to rely on a contractor to cut and bale your hay, if the weather conditions are ideal, farmers all want to use him at the same time. The arrangement that we currently have got with Eric and Elizabeth works very well for us both so why would we want to consider another airstrip.
- f) The area Contact Energy wants to put the pylons through is also very scenic. The view down the valley between Flemings Road and Opuatia is very attractive. Having the transmission line run through this valley would ruin its natural beauty.
- g) In addition to the above, much of our property at 1417 SH 22 looks over towards where Contact Energy wants to build the line. If we were to sell the property in the future some of the best sites to build a house and access down the main track would be affected by a view of the power lines and pylons. It would severely devalue the property.
- h) I think the site chosen for the lines to cross my property is also not ideal because it crosses a ridge that is exposed to the natural elements, especially the wind.

- i) I would also like to bring your attention to similar plans that I have read about in the newspapers, to erect a high voltage transmission line from the centre of the North Island to Auckland. Transpower has bought properties on which to erect the line. In that process it has also bought a number of dairy farms. It then proceeded to put an easement on the title before placing the properties back on the market. It has been widely reported in the newspapers that buyer interest in those properties was extremely low. Prior to the auction Transpower and their real estate agents said the properties were for sale and they were willing to meet the market. But come auction day not a single one of those dairy farms sold.
6. We are being offered a lump sum of \$20,000 and a easement fee of \$23,500 to sign a 27-page compensation agreement with Contact Energy which will last 35 years. That works out to be just over \$1200 a year which isn't a lot. Recently when fertiliser prices skyrocketed I was able to stock pile 30 tonne in my manure bin at the top of the airstrip, which I brought at the old, cheaper price saving about \$1800. So Contact's \$1200 a year compensation payment doesn't go very far.
7. I'd also like to question why land owners affected by a planned wind farm project on Waikato West Coast are set to receive significantly more compensation than land owners who'll be affected by the transmission line. Mr Graeme John Black will have 8 wind turbines on his property. If I could quote from paragraph 20 of his brief of evidence in respect to the Hauauru Ma Raki Wind farm proposal:

First and foremost obviously, there is a clear financial benefit to my wife and I. Depending on the power price and the number and size of the turbines ultimately installed, that could be in the range of \$120,000 -\$180,000 additional income per year. That sort of income base will also make a difference to the capital value of our farm.
8. For all of the above reasons I ask the Board of Inquiry that if Contact don't want to put the power cables under ground, which the Franklin Council has suggested, they can offer their 27 page option agreement to another land owner because we feel that their current one doesn't add value to our business.