

**BOARD OF INQUIRY
HAUURU MA RAKI WIND FARM PROPOSAL**

In the matter of the Resource Management Act 1991

And

In the matter of resource consent applications by Contact Wind Limited
In respect of the Hauauru Ma Raki Wind Farm proposal

BRIEF OF EVIDENCE OF HOWARD SPENCER

My name is Howard Spencer, I represent the owners (being my two brothers and myself) of Sunset Station that is located between the Northern Boundary of the proposed wind farm and Port Waikato township. We are a private family business that has several large rural properties in New Zealand and a range of other business interests.

Sunset Station is a sheep and beef cattle breeding and finishing farm. It comprises approximately 3400 ha. There is a large area of regenerating native bush (approximately 700 ha) adjacent to the coast extending south from behind Port Waikato Township to the Huriwai stream. The property also contains other pockets of high quality native bush.

We have owned the property for 29 years. The original landholding was purchased by my father in 1980 and then expanded by the purchase of neighbouring properties during the 80's. Amongst the family I have taken a particular interest in Sunset and its close proximity to Auckland means that I have spent a great deal of my spare time over the past 25 years, hunting, fishing and generally enjoying the property.

In past years my father, Mr Peter Spencer, was a regular visitor to the farm. He also led family expeditions to the farm with my brothers, fencing, clearing scrub and collecting firewood. In more recent years his health meant that he was unable to enjoy the property in the manner he had in the past but he was always interested to hear of the property and its progress. My father and I had a shared love for the property and vision for its future. It is our intention to have this same connection with the next generation who are starting to come and experience the property with us. It is my intention to live on the farm at some point in the future.

Over the years we have invested heavily in the property to enhance its value and appearance from that which was purchased, I have personally planted close to 5,000 trees (mostly native) on the land and this would be a small proportion of the total numbers that have been planted.

Sunset isn't the easiest place to farm and the nature of the land and climate mean that the property is often less profitable than our other farming investments. But we believe that long term the properties proximity to Auckland will underpin the asset value and open up other alternative land uses.

In addition to the farm staff, our family and friends make use of the farm for recreational purposes; fishing, hunting, horse-riding etc. The presence of the turbines represents a significant change to the character of the land and to the quality of the environment, and indeed the whole district.

Al Yates of Windfarm group originally approached the company in 2002 and we agreed to allow them to conduct wind testing on the property. In 2007 Contact Wind offered us a wind farming agreement to lease the land for the location of wind turbines. The company was also approached by other parties interested in investigating the potential for wind farming, one of these included

the potential to invest in the development of a wind farm and this was also investigated. The agreement with WFG at the time precluded dealings with other parties, but these discussions were held with their consent. In the event we elected not to pursue this development.

The Sunset owners considered the Contact Wind offer to lease at length. In assessing the proposal we weighed the potential revenue stream from the turbines against the loss in amenity value of the land. In the final event we elected not to participate because of the hugely invasive nature of the turbines and their impact on the long-term value of the land and the loss of amenity value to ourselves, our employees and the community at large. As currently proposed the wind farm will forever alter a unique piece of coastline in an extremely negative manner.

Whilst Windfarm group and latterly Contact Wind have had direct dealings with Lester Wright and Michael Spencer (my brother); my father (when he was alive), brother Christopher and the trustees have been fully informed throughout the process and we arrived at a joint decision not to proceed with the Wind Farm lease. We do not rule out some form of wind farm development in the future but that would only be contemplated at the back of Sunset away from the coast block.

It is my understanding that at no time during our discussions with the Contact Wind personnel did they provide information on the locations of turbines on neighbouring land. My own enquiries had led me to believe that some of the neighbouring properties had also declined to participate and I was surprised to learn of the inclusion in the consent. It was not until after the consent was lodged that we were provided with information on turbine locations on adjoining land.

I occupy the "White House" when staying at Sunset and am a regular visitor. The house enjoys spectacular views of the landscape to the South West. I was amazed to learn that the assessed visual impact of the presence of the turbines on house was only moderate and invite the commissioners to visit the house and assess the situation for themselves. The turbines will have a devastating impact on the landscape when viewed from this site.

In my experience the landscape in the vicinity of Sunset is quite unique. Visitors are constantly amazed by the limestone formations and it is these formations in close proximity to the coast and bush that provides such a unique character to the land. I do not agree with Mr Lister's assessment that these features can be "separated off" and protected. The Coastal catchment to the North of the Ngapuriri and Ramsden ridge needs to be separated off and protected as a landscape unit.

During the consultation process Contact Wind produced a booklet of information on the proposed wind farm. This booklet included Sunset as part of the wind farm where no such agreement had been made. This booklet was widely distributed without our knowledge or consent, caused us some issues

with the local community. This raised questions in my mind about the accuracy of information provided during the consultation process.

It came as a shock to me when the consent was notified to find turbines overlapping our boundary and to my absolute horror; on the coastal area of the Ramsden and Whariana land holdings directly in the face of Sunset, and spoiling the coastal area that is in pristine condition. During our negotiations Contact Wind had removed turbines from the coast block of Sunset due to the sensitive nature of this area and to protect the coastline.

The presence of the turbines at such close proximity diminishes the quality of the environment on Sunset. Shadowing, flicker and noise will all be at unacceptable levels from experienced close to the boundary. This can only be addressed by removing the turbines from the boundary and we request a separation distance of 1.0 km so that the effects are contained within the consented area.

In addition to the impact of the proposed turbine sites on existing land holdings the turbines will restrict the range of future uses of the land. There are other potential house sites situated in close proximity to the turbines that will be severely impacted upon. If we choose to erect a new dwelling closer to the boundary will the turbines be removed?

By removing the turbines from Ramsden and Whariana properties (Group A) the coast block between two outstanding land forms would be clear of turbines. This is a small total loss to the project and would enable us to continue to enjoy the land. We also wish the turbines close to our back boundary be removed to a distance of 1 km. The current proposal provides for 150 m turbines within 50 m of the boundary and given the consenting envelope, potentially much closer.

We are requesting that Contact Wind adjust their proposal to ensure there is no negative impact on our land or the community's enjoyment of it. The changes sought are minor in the total in the scale of the project, 540 MW and are unlikely to affect its viability.

In addition to the longer-term impacts outlined there are some immediate issues around the construction that concern me. I am not sure the community is aware of the impact this will have on the surrounding area, nor does the proposal properly address these.

The roading in this area struggles to cope with the present loads and will not handle the many millions of tons of equipment and material that will be required for a project of this size. The applicant has only highlighted areas for improvement on the road but a total upgrade is required to accommodate the increased loads safely. Post development traffic will also increase with sightseers and maintenance personnel.

The current road users will face significant extra traffic and a decline in safety particularly during construction. The road is a lifeline for the community for

safety (Fire, Ambulance and Police access), school children, commuters and business access.

Lastly the damage caused by the scarring of the landscape, especially by the coast will be extremely detrimental to the environment and the coast line; the service roads that will need to be built and the pad sizes for the bases of the pylons are huge. This will cause problems along the coast with run off ruining the fishing in the coastal area and the streams full of native crayfish (Koura) and whitebait. There is no way to stop this once the earthworks begin.

The long term scarring of the landscape will be huge and will affect the environment for many years to come. It is hard to understand why we would voluntarily ruin our coastline in this way.

In summary, we are not standing in the way of this development in principle - we just want to preserve some of the more significant features of the area in their natural state and to protect our property from being negatively affected by the wind farms development.