

**BOARD OF INQUIRY
TE MIHI GEOTHERMAL POWER STATION PROPOSAL**

In the Matter of the Resource Management Act 1991

And

In the matter of resource consent applications by Contact Energy Limited
in respect of the Te Mihi Geothermal Power Station Proposal

REBUTTAL EVIDENCE OF BRAD COOMBS

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Introduction

1. My name is Brad Coombs, I am an Associate, Senior Landscape Architect, and the Tauranga Manager of Isthmus Group Ltd.
2. I prepared Evidence in Chief on behalf of Contact Energy Limited (“Contact”) outlining the landscape and visual effects, and the proposed landscape mitigation planting of the development of the proposed Te Mihi Geothermal Power Station (“Power Station”) and the associated proposed Te Mihi Switchyard and Transmission Line.
3. I re-confirm that I have read the ‘Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses’ contained in the Environment Court Consolidated Practice Note 2006, and that I agree to comply with it, in accordance with the statement in my Evidence in Chief.

Purpose

4. The purpose of my evidence in reply is to acknowledge and respond to the “*Report On Consent Applications Under s42A Resource Management Act 1991 – Version 1. Te Mihi Geothermal Power Station*” dated 17 June 2008 (the Section 42A Report) (page 18), which comments that I am “*willing to consider a more solid screen, if that is what the neighbours want*”.

Amended Landscape Mitigation Planting

5. I met with a number of submitters, and neighbours of the Contact property on which the Power Station is proposed to be sited (Birdsall, Koster, Ellery, and Price) on 10 June 2008 to discuss the landscape mitigation planting proposed in the Landscape and Visual Assessment accompanying the applications, and in my Evidence in Chief. I explained that the purpose of providing gaps in the planting was to maintain an open landscape character in the areas surrounding the Power Station, while still providing screening of the Power Station from surrounding areas. This approach avoids putting up a green wall.
6. The submitters were in agreement that they would prefer a solid line of planting (excepting gaps for the access road and well pads), generally in a north-south orientation, and an additional solid line of planting, approximately 50 metres to the south of the Price and Ellery southern property boundaries, oriented generally east-west, to screen the Power Station and its components from view within the Price and Ellery properties. Prior to the meeting I walked the land between the southern boundary of these properties and the Power Station site, and I confirmed that landform alone will be sufficient to screen the Power Station from view within the submitters properties. However submitters (Price and Ellery) would prefer an additional line of planting to ensure that there is no doubt to them that the power station will not be visible.
7. The submitters requested a change in the planting species to be used. After some discussion, while acknowledging that a screen planting of indigenous vegetation was preferable, in this situation a combination of pine (*Pinus radiata*), and Japanese Cedar (*Cryptomeria japonica*), would provide the speed (pine) and long term amenity (Japanese Cedar), which the submitters desired from views from the north and the west. I consider that the use of these species will fit

into the surrounding landscape. I have prepared an updated Landscape Mitigation Plan (attached as **Exhibit BC01**) which responds to the position reached with the submitters. The final mitigation planting will occur under the approved Landscape Management Plan prepared in accordance with the Landscaping Conditions proposed in Land Use Consent No RM070304 (Exhibit SGD 10 in the Rebuttal Evidence of Mr Daysh). Exhibit BC01 is one of the matters that particular regard must be had to in the preparation of this Landscape Management Plan.

8. It was acknowledged during the meeting that changes to the location and types of plantings proposed would not completely screen the Power Station from view from the upper slopes of the Birdsall and Koster property, as presented in Photo-simulations **5A**, **5B**, and **5C**, attached to my Evidence in Chief.
9. I understand that the Landscape Mitigation Plan, as shown in **Exhibit BC01**, responds to the concerns of the submitters and I consider that it appropriately fits within the landscape.

Brad Coombs