

BEFORE THE BOARD OF INQUIRY

IN THE MATTER of the Resource
Management Act 1991

AND

IN THE MATTER of applications for
resource consent and
notices of requirement
by Transpower New
Zealand Limited for the
North Island Grid
Upgrade Project

**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF ALAN JAMES NICHOL IN REBUTTAL FOR
TRANSPOWER NEW ZEALAND LIMITED
(Aerial top-dressing)**

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Introduction

1. **MY** name is Alan James Nichol. I wish to present rebuttal evidence to the statements of evidence of:
 - (a) Mr Aaron Collier, on behalf of South Waikato District Council (**SWDC**);
 - (b) Mr Gary Orbell, on behalf of Matamata-Piako District Council (**MPDC**);
 - (c) Mr Michael O'Connor, on behalf of MPDC; and
 - (d) Mr Walter Vercoe.

2. I address each submitter's relevant comments below.

2. **BEFORE** discussing the submitter evidence, I note that the locations and colour of the air strips in the Map Book are not exactly as I have described them in my evidence in chief. To assist the Board, and submitters, I attach a set of plans which clearly show the specific air strips I have referred to (using the same page numbering and layout as in the Map Books). These are attached to this rebuttal evidence as **Appendix "A"**.

Mr Aaron Collier on behalf of SWDC (Submission number 0799)

3. **AT** paragraph 5.6 of his revised evidence, Mr Collier states that many farms within South Waikato will have farming activities hindered by the application. He says that for many farms, the application of fertiliser "*will be severely affected by the lines, as well as the effects on airstrips along the routes*".

4. **IN** relation to aerial topdressing, and as I have acknowledged in my evidence in chief, properties that may be affected by the proposed transmission line may be faced with some increasing spreading costs. This is due to the fact that the property may now have to be sown or fertilised in a manner different to the manner by which topdressing was being undertaken before the proposed transmission line is in place. This may mean that the property is now not sown or fertilised in the most efficient manner. For example, some properties may have to be sown parallel to the line, which may be a completely different direction to which it is being sown now. However, I would expect that most, if not all properties, can still be topdressed. My evidence in chief, paragraph 69 to 75, covers this view in some detail.

5. **MR** Collier also raises issues about effects on farming operations. At paragraph 7.2.2 he states:

"These effects include severance effects (such as where dwellings, farm buildings or dairy sheds are separated by the line) restriction on the use of equipment and direct effects on land use such as the inability to use and operate aerial topdressing strips and apply fertiliser. During my site visit I observed two airstrips which are affected by the line. It remains unclear how Transpower is to address the loss of such important rural services particularly where due to topography the application of fertiliser by air is the only practical option."

6. **IT** is likely that the two airstrips referred to are the two mentioned in my evidence in chief, paragraphs 96 to 103, both of which are in the South Waikato District. These airstrips are on the Scherer and Ranger properties. I have made site visits to both of these air strips. One has no agricultural use at present, as far as I am aware. Since preparing my evidence in chief, I understand Transpower has entered negotiations to upgrade both of these airstrips. These upgrades will make them suitable for aerial topdressing use in the future.
7. **THERE** may be other airstrips in the South Waikato district that could be affected by the proposed transmission line, but at this stage no other airstrips have been brought to my attention.

Gary Orbell on behalf of MPDC (Submission number 1113)

8. **MR** Orbell, at paragraph 5.3 of his evidence, questions *"the effect of the line on the navigation equipment of low-flying aircraft in the vicinity of the line (including topdressing aircraft)"*.
9. **AS** discussed at paragraph 58 of my evidence in chief, most areas of the country have a number of transmission lines crossing them at different heights. I have flown fixed wing aircraft over a number of transmission lines throughout my career. It is only recently that navigational equipment, in the form of GPS, has been installed in topdressing planes. It has been my experience, and that of the pilots employed by my company, that modern planes, that are fitted with GPS guidance systems, are not impacted upon by flying in the vicinity of such lines. I

note that Mr Cooper provides evidence about GPS equipment and its operation on farms, in both his evidence in chief and rebuttal evidence.

Michael O'Connor, on behalf of MPDC (Submission number 1113)

10. **MR** O'Connor make similar comments to those of Mr Collier that I have discussed above. Mr O'Connor's comments are based on responses to a survey he has undertaken.
11. **OTHER** experts (Dr Phillips, Ms Allan) have commented on the quality of the survey undertaken. I would not expect the issues relating to top-dressing in Matamata-Piako District to be any different from those in the other rural areas that I have described in my evidence in chief, and in this rebuttal evidence.

Walter Vercoe on behalf of Parahiwi Farm (Submission number 1129)

12. **MR** Vercoe refers to the application of fertiliser by topdressing aircraft, at paragraphs 4 and 5 of his evidence. In particular, Mr Vercoe states he would no longer be able to apply fertilizer to the front corner of his property, and that the proposed transmission line is directly between the airstrip and some of the neighbouring properties, which also use the airstrip.
13. **IN** my opinion, there will be no effect on Mr Vercoe's ability to use his airstrip. I have visited this strip and refer to it at paragraph 110 of my evidence in chief. The airstrip is a suitable distance and elevation from the proposed transmission line. I see no reason why either Mr Vercoe, or his neighbours, cannot continue using the airstrip.
14. **REGARDING** the topdressing of Mr Vercoe's property, I would expect there to be a slight increase in the time taken to sow his property as the proposed transmission line does create a small parcel of land which would have to be topdressed separately to the rest of the farm. In my professional opinion, this small parcel of land could be topdressed safely.

Alan James Nichol

14 May 2008

APPENDIX "A"

(COPIES OF REPLACEMENT MAPS FOR MAP BOOKS)

