

**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 RANDAL McKENZIE and MARK SPRING**

**ON BEHALF OF BROWNHILL ROAD (WHITFORD) RESIDENTS**

**Introduction**

1. We Randal McKenzie and Mark Spring are residents of Brownhill Rd Whitford, living at 122 and 130 respectively. We represent all residents (The Residents) that live at the upper end of Brownhill Rd from number 106 onwards, a total of some 30 people on eight properties.
2. The majority of residents in our group are from seven lifestyle properties in a rural subdivision off Brownhill Road ranging from one to eight acres. The lifestyle subdivision was developed seven years ago and has elevated views over farmland and native bush across the valley between Brownhill Road and Scenic Drive off the Redoubt Road extension. The valley and Scenic Drive has been identified in the Auckland Regional Plan as an area of high scenic value.
3. Our resident group is arguably the most affected group of all the residents on the Proposed 400 kV transmission line. Our elevated views would look directly over the transmission line and pylons, as well as the proposed transition and substations at

the Northern end of the line. Some of the properties are within 100m of the proposed substation site at 149 Brownhill Road.

4. Our resident group fully supports Manukau City Council (MCC) and Underground in Manukau (UIM) in all respects, but in particular support their evidence for undergrounding the proposed line to beyond the greater Auckland basin to the south of Ardmore Airport.
5. We also agree with MCC, UIM and New Era Energy's (NEE's) position that the 400kV option should have been declined by the Electricity Commission (EC) if the correct Statement of Opportunities (SOO) 2007 figures had have been used, in lieu of a more environmentally friendly 220kV option.

### Background

6. Most of the residents purchased their lifestyle blocks in Whitford for specific reasons but not limited to:
  - The lifestyle and enjoyment of a rural landscape and surrounding with activities such as horse riding, walking, cycling, grazing animals etc
  - The peace and quiet enjoyed in a rural area
  - To raise children in a country environment
  - Proximity to the city (a number of residents have jobs in nearby East Tamaki)
7. The Whitford area appealed to the residents in particular because it had strict planning requirements and the subdivision had strict covenants. The subdivision was designed in accordance with Rural Plan Change 8 with the intention of creating high amenity value to both the rural and neighbouring urban areas (Refer to Evidence of Denis J Scott on behalf of MCC). All gullies and steep unusable land had been re-vegetated with native plants prior to purchase.
8. Most residents are in the process of adding or have added second generation natives now that the first generation natives have prepared the soil and can provide adequate shelter. The covenants on our titles ensured that this native bush would be fenced and hence could not be destroyed by animals so as to ensure the enjoyment of future generations and enhancement of the Whitford area. This type of sustainable environmentally friendly landscape approach appealed not only to the

residents but to the wider community and MCC. Rural Plan Change 8 is currently in the process of final approval and is expected to be made operative prior to the conclusion of the Board of Inquiry's hearings.

9. The designation of the Transpower 400kV project through our beautiful valley has absolutely no regard to the sustainable and environmentally friendly intent proposed in Rural Plan Change 8.
10. It is hard to imagine another environment that could be more devastated by up to 70m pylons and a substation. The topography will exaggerate the substations and pylons impact as it is surrounded by the beautiful natural valley. The massive earthworks required for the substation on the Transpower owned site at 149 Brownhill Road will also scar the landscape. Transpower own a number of properties that are flat thus requiring minimal earthworks and are also south of the Ardmore flight zone that would be perfect for substation development, for example the Carruthers Property on Tourist Road in Clevedon.
11. Although the line does not pass directly over our properties (except for the Dodd Property at 143 Brownhill Road) we see the lines, pylons and substation in our main views from an elevated position. The fact that the lines, pylon and substation do not pass over or aren't on our properties (except for the Dodd Property) we are unable to seek compensation under the Public Works Act. We have requested compensation for these adverse effects during the consultation process; this was initially considered by Transpower due to our extreme situation but was subsequently denied. We believe that if compensation is not available as a remedy for the residents, then that is an important reason why the Board of Inquiry should not approve the project in this location.

#### Transpower Consultation and Substation Site Selection

12. The residents started consulting with Transpower and in particular their consultant Dr Peter Phillips in 2006.
13. Transpower purchased the property at 149 Brownhill Road under a nominee company at tender in 2006. This land was purchased prior to the "D shackle incident" and Auckland blackouts which resulted in the amended proposal and the need for a substation at Brownhill Road. The initial substation design was an AIS substation, the size of three football fields. Although the substation has changed from AIS to the current GIS configuration, which in his evidence Dr Peter Phillips

says was due to the consultation process, Transpower have admitted that in the long term, a GIS substation is cheaper to maintain and requires far less earthworks than an AIS substation.

14. During the consultation process we recommended other sites to Transpower including another site already owned by Manukau City Council at 383 East Tamaki Road, opposite Hampton Park. This site was also supported by Manukau City Council in its submission to Transpower. It was discounted by Transpower because it was too small to accommodate an AIS substation. As it could accommodate a GIS substation which is now the preferred alternative, we believe that Transpower should redress this as it is far superior due to being in an industrial area and with close proximity to Pakuranga and Otahuhu substations.
15. Late in the consultation process, one of our residents in our group (Mark and Lindsey Dodd) offered Transpower the back four hectares of their property to accommodate the substation. This was a bold move and an extremely generous offer from the perspective of the remaining residents as it located the substation closer to the Dodd homestead although not in their view from the front of their house. Transpower reviewed this option and subsequently discounted it.
16. The Dodd option would have resulted in the Pylons moving further south which is a less visually intrusive option for most of the residents and also those residents located on the top of Scenic Drive. This option moves the substation behind a small ridge and group of Macrocarpa Tress which naturally hides the impact from our subdivision in the most environmentally friendly way, fitting in with the current existing landscape. We feel Transpower's ownership of the land at 149 Brownhill Road has limited their review of other alternatives (including Hampton Park and the Dodd Proposal). Transpower confirmed to us that if they were starting the substation proposal again Hampton Park would have been preferred to the Brownhill Road Site. Transpower also noted the Brownhill Road scored 5 on the scale of 1-5 for the best to worst site locations.

#### Visual Effects and Associated Effects on Value

17. As previously mentioned the visual effects of the substation are inconsistent with the vision in the District Plan for the Whitford Area and Rural Plan Change 8. This has had an immediate adverse effect on the values of our properties. From the outset of this project Transpower caused the values of our properties to depreciate

by placing in the public arena various alternatives and worst case scenarios (such as pictures of the AIS substation).

18. This has left the owners in limbo with limited ability to develop or sell properties as opportunities arose or out of necessity. For example, one of the residents, Mark Thompson, has been offered promotion to Australia and would like to take the opportunity and relocate his family there but is unable to do so due to the inability to sell their house and the loss of value due to the proposed pylons and substation.
19. The residents have been frustrated through the process, as the Electricity Commission have only looked at the investment issues rather than any environmental or social impact. Also, the Electricity Commission approved the project on a small \$11 million difference, compared to the 220kV line option. Had the loss of value of our properties along with others affected on the proposed route and the ongoing environmental effects been taken into account we believe the outcome would have been different.

#### Construction

20. The construction of the substation has been explained by Transpower to be in the vicinity of a one to two year project. This would mean that the construction would cover one to two whole summers. The residents are particularly concerned about the effects of the dust, debris and noise on their properties. Due to the natural topography of the valley we are in a bowl with a prevailing South West wind which will directly carry dust etc over to our properties.
21. Almost all of the residents have small children and the dust and debris would blow onto our roofs and into our drinking water and dramatically reduce the air quality. The residents are concerned about the effect of the dust on the breathing air of the nine children in this subdivision (there are seven children under the age of seven years old). This would dramatically reduce the quality of life we enjoy as we lose the enjoyment of our outside living on our patios during these summer months. We believe this to be unworkable.
22. The noise created during the construction process will be subject to considerable acoustic amplifying effects due to the adjacent hillsides, and also the fact that there is very little background noise in this environment.

23. To make matters worse Transpower also in 2007 added a cable route down Brownhill Rd. This further reduces the ability of these families to utilise the outdoors for their children. In effect it makes them prisoners in their own homes. They will be unable to use the road for recreation such as horse riding, walking, running. This is compounded by the fact that this is a dead end road and there is no alternative available. Whitford Park Road is extremely busy and not safe to walk on.

#### Social and Health Impacts

24. Some of our residents have reported incidents of migraines and other stress related issues throughout this process. One resident reported that they had experienced huge personal stress from the proposal. A member of the household is a Managed Migraine Sufferer and has on specialist advice had to increase her medication to seven times her previous level to manage the migraines, including requiring an MRI brain scan at the specialist's recommendation to rule out internal issues. The increased migraine attacks have been attributed to the stress that she is currently under with the Transpower proposal.

#### Noise Impacts

25. During the consultation Transpower employed a noise specialist to conduct tests. We are concerned that the noise was not effectively measured as due to the low lying nature of this landscape, this valley is covered in a blanket of fog most winter mornings. This will increase the corona noise from the transformers. Transpower evidence does not take account of this.

#### Future Potential of Brownhill Road

26. The proposed Transpower substation site is located on the exact intersection of two major fault lines (the Polo Lane and Whitford faults). These fault lines are pronounced enough that hot spring water is available to landowners via bores on the adjacent sites.
27. Surely, it is in Auckland's interest to include this site as a potential natural resource, which could be developed in future for tourism and spas. To date several studies have investigated this.

### Undergrounding Funding

28. Manukau City Council have offered to assist with the funding of undergrounding the route further south of Ardmore Airport. Transpower have not engaged with them in this discussion. Chris Freke, (Manukau City Council - Head of Infrastructure) has stated that the funds would be recovered from developers in the Brookby Area, as this area is zoned for future development. The recently introduced Plan Change and Variation for Whitford has also allowed the division of land into smaller blocks, which will increase the number of residents in this area in the near future. There is a Draft Rural Growth Strategy for Brookby Valley.

### Conclusion

29. The residents of Brownhill Road are the most disadvantaged of all properties affected along the route from Whakamaru to Auckland. Not only was the route designated to pass through our beautiful valley but a substation and cable down Brownhill Road have been added. These developments lower the amenity value of our landscape considerably and are contrary to Rural Plan Change 8 which is currently being finalised.
30. We respectfully ask the Board of Inquiry to require that Transpower do the following in order of preference:
- (a) Underground the line to the south of Ardmore Airport.
  - (b) Locate the substation and the over-ground to underground terminus on the Carruthers Property at Tourist Road, Clevedon.
  - (c) Locate the substation further south on the Dodd Property.
  - (d) If the substation and pylons are approved at 149 Brownhill Road, we would request the following –
    - (i) require Transpower to mitigate against all of the adverse impacts such as water, air quality, noise, safe access to properties, during the construction phase.
    - (ii) require monopoles to be installed at positions 6, 7 and 8, as has been proposed by Transpower for tower 5.
    - (iii) Mitigate the visual impact of the substation by planting and landscaping, to coordinate with existing native vegetation.

Signed by

Randal McKenzie:



Mark Spring:



**RESIDENT REPRESENTATIVES AND CONTACT PERSONS:**

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