

Introduction:

1. My name is Alison Mildon. I live at 346 Millricks Line, off SH57, and physically located south of the entrance to the Kahuterawa Valley and below the ridgeline south of Te Mata Peak.
2. I am a member of TAG and FOTR.
3. My written submission to the MRP Turitea application outlined in quite general terms the areas of **greatest** concern to me – adverse effects, including adverse cumulative effects, during and after construction on:
 - Landscape – as inclusive of the physical Tararua Range landform, the visual concept of 'skyline' – seamless and unable to be mapped, the existing sense of 'naturalness, the presence of indigenous vegetation, the clear contours under pasture, and the transient colours, shades and textures in response to weather and atmospheric conditions, time of day, or season of the year.
 - Visual amenity and aesthetic appeal for residents, visitors and recreational users
 - Individual and "community" enjoyment and wellbeing
4. I opposed MRP's application in its entirety, and over the many days of this hearing have heard no evidence, not even the surrender of Motorimu that leads me to reside from that position.
5. Ad hoc, disparate wind farm development already extends along an approximate 14km stretch of skyline and associated ridges and spurs. The Turitea proposal almost doubles the physical extent, and from the western side visually fills in the area between the Pahiatua Track and Kahuterawa Valley – the central backdrop or foreground view from a large zone of visual influence extending beyond the Palmerston North district and across the Manawatu District.

Membership of TAG

6. I became a member of TAG in May or June 2006, immediately after *Energreen* made public their plans for the Motorimu Wind Farm which, as subsequently applied for, located turbines directly behind and above my property.
7. I joined, not because I'm a "group" kind of person but because I felt under threat, and something of great value to me and others was under threat, and in such circumstances:
 - Individuals are powerless alone
 - Anticipation of loss, and I'm not speaking of financial loss, is a lonely place to be on one's own, and
 - I was prepared to make a contribution towards a common goal to which I subscribed.
8. To this end, for the hearing before commissioners in 2007 and then the Environment Court appeal hearing in 2008 I, in most part, researched and wrote the non-expert evidence for TAG's case in respect of landscape and visual amenity [as quite separate from personal submissions].
9. This was a difficult task. I'm not a landscape architect and do not purport to be one. The commitment required over an extended period of time, the sense of responsibility, the worry engendered by this and the proposal itself, and the distress of finding oneself in opposition to neighbours and friends is a hard place to be, and comes at great cost in a variety of ways.

The Turitea Reserve Wind Farm Proposal

10. In September 2006 I lodged a personal submission in opposition to PNCC's proposal to change the purpose of the Turitea Reserve and the Reserve's Management Plan. I did this because I believed this was an additional threat to something of great value.
11. This was not only my opinion. Signals had come from the then PNCC landscape architect that development should stop with Te Rere Hau at the Pahiatua Track, and from the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment that there were concerns.
12. I had been on the conducted tour to view the proposed Turitea Reserve wind farm site, and was deeply concerned about the misrepresentation and bias contained in the proposal document, as well as the omission of important facts about the wind farm. I challenged the PNCC tour guide to front up in his commentary with details about the wind farm only to be told the tour was not about a wind farm but about an eco park.

The Turitea Wind Farm Proposal

13. As far as I am concerned the general public were unaware of plans for a larger wind farm extending onto private land and this information was relevant to, and might well have influenced submitters and submissions in respect of the change of purpose consultation.
14. However, if there were rumours or speculation there were no facts. If some information came out at the subsequent court case this was too late to be of any relevance to earlier processes. As far as I am aware the first facts to be made publicly available arose from the first MRP open day at the Convention Centre.

Proposed One Plan

15. To submit to one-off applications for consent is one matter, but the legislative framework within which decisions are made is of great relevance and importance.
16. The Wanganui Regional Council (Horizons) Proposed One Plan was notified mid 2007 and I made submissions to this - one personal, the other on behalf of TAG.
17. Preparation commenced in May 2007, submissions were lodged in September 2007 and a high level of time and commitment followed: attendance at pre-hearing meetings, briefings and discussions, the researching and preparation of material including TAG's witness statements, presenting three verbal submissions to the hearings panel and attendance at one other, and undertaking all follow up requested by the panel. This activity ended on 10 August 2009.

Other involvements

18. In 2008 I made a written and verbal submission to PNCC in respect of the proposed Kahuterawa Outdoor Recreation Area, and submissions to stage one of PNCC's landscape study, and to other PNCC and Horizons planning processes in 2009.
19. I have done this, and lobbied at a political level in my own time and at my own cost, and without payment. That is the reality for individuals and communities when confronted by power, politics, policies, planning provisions and process.

Why

20. I have pondered off and on over many weeks as to how I might present this verbal submission and make it count.

21. Last night I decided that passion was about all that was left to me and I have spent all night writing in order to assist with the smooth flowing of this hearing.
22. What I write is personal – I live here and MRP do not. It is about people, and so far they have hardly rated a mention. Although I don't live in direct sight of this particular wind farm its presence will register in an adverse way when I leave Millricks Line, just as the turbines of Te Rere Hau, Tararua and Te Apliti, separately, in sequence, or in coalescence already do.
23. Of equal importance however, is that I cannot expect others to endure something I would find unacceptable for myself. In this regard, and hopefully others, I do care what happens to my neighbour. Mr Hegley's comments startled me.
24. Risk is implicit in adverse effect, remedy can be difficult if not impossible to achieve, and mitigation – theoretical promises, promises – can be the soft compromise that turns out to have little value in terms of ameliorating adverse effect. Is it too late when enough has finally been acknowledged.
25. In meeting society's needs and wants should we be following a mitigation of effects model or approaching matters from a sustainability perspective? This was a question posed by Dr Morgan Williams as Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment. He believed the latter, and I wonder in which direction this hearing is going.

Have my concerns been avoided, remedied or mitigated

26. The answer is no, not where it matters most to me. From where I sit it would appear that MRP is following the first approach, as the second would surely have necessitated something that doesn't seem to have occurred.
27. From the outset, a clear identification and understanding of the values of the physical and visual cross boundary landscape in question: its value to people living in close and wider proximity to the site, as well as those visiting or travelling through – a genuine attempt to take these values and concerns into account when designing the project, and a regard for the people who live here.
28. It would also surely have meant meaningful ground level and continuous input from professional expertise in efforts to meet principles of good landscape design, both on site, and in relation to the nearest neighbour Te Rere Hau, and down the line cumulatively with the other ad hoc developments of Tararua I, II and III, and Te Apiti.
29. Instead, a last minute perception survey about wind farms (not the values of the receiving environment) was commissioned by MRP, and there have been strenuous attempts to discredit PNCC's efforts to do something that they [MRP] could have done but did not.
30. Furthermore, it seems that landscape architects have either been peripheral to, or absent from the overall design team, for most of the time, at least.
31. It is my contention that given the years leading up to this, a best practice application would not have resulted in such divisions as seem to exist between Mr Wyatt on the one hand and Messrs Bray and Anstey and Ms Lucas and Williams on the other even when acknowledging their own differences of opinion.
32. And whilst in general there seems to be some common ground between this latter group and Mr Brown, in the last minute of his testimony Mr Brown appeared to cede the Turitea site because in his opinion the landscape north of Te Apiti and south of Turitea is of even higher quality and of more importance to protect.
33. I can only hope Mr Brown offers his expertise pro bono to potential affected parties when those developers waiting in the wings to catch the wind beyond Wharite and

Kaihinu decide to fly, or when a potential developer sees value in the space in the sky created because Motorimu is dead in the water.

34. Furthermore, the assessment of effects put forward by MRP seems to be based on a level of eyesight quite different from mine. Last weekend, at 9.30am on a clear sunny morning, and again at 5.30pm on an evening completely overcast by high cloud and no sunshine escaping, existing Te Apiti and Tararua turbines were quite visible from the Marton Cemetery in the Rangitikei District.
35. MRP's assessment also appears to be based on a landscape quite different from that with which I live: my home. Not just a house, or somewhere within the boundaries of a property, but "home". The view as far as I can see, the space that contains the place and places to which I attach, and the views and vistas that contribute to my sense of wellbeing.
36. This is where I am, and the most important feature within the wide or more intimate landscape of my life is the Tararua Range – what else do we have of prominence, and how fortunate that some is left to be lovely in its own right.
37. Because it forms backdrop or foreground, on the western side the most important section of that range falls between the Manawatu Gorge and Kaihinu, an area framed by the Ruahine and Tararua State Forest Parks.
38. Twenty years on a farm located on the board flat Kairanga plains to the west of Palmerston North. Twenty years living elsewhere in New Zealand or overseas. Twenty years living in the foothills nestled below the ridgeline running south from Te Mata. This "view" in real time, in memory, or in mind's eye has been my life's constant.
39. It started from the backyard sandpit, from the flat and treeless paddocks of the farm, from the gravel road pedalling a three-wheel tricycle to school, from my grandfather's car with leather seats and my parents' car with a running board.
40. It continued as one moved on in life, and moved around on wheels or foot, or when one simply stood, and its time could be running out.
41. Recreation, and the relationship this has with landscape character, ambience and levels of enjoyment is another area that has all but been ignored by MRP's assessments of effect.
42. Disregard for the existing values of the Kahuterawa Outdoor Recreation Area, Hardings Park and Red Rock. No mention of the Manawatu section of the national Te Araroa walkway which runs up the Turitea Valley, along the base of the Reserve and into Greens Road. No mention of Palmerston North's Bridle Track running along the Manawatu River, or of other many walkways in and outside the urban area in which views of the Tararua Range feature so significantly.
43. One of the jewels in the crown is the lookout between Turitea Road and Pacific Drive, a beautiful, sometimes breathtaking view along a large section on the proposed wind farm site and up the mouth of the Kahuterawa Valley to Awararu, particularly so as it responds to light and weather effects.
44. Furthermore, letters to the Manawatu Standard have told of wind turbine noise spoiling the experience of walking the Gorge Track. To have a large get away from it all, accessible area such as the Kahuterawa situated so near to a large population base is a treasure to be highly valued. To put its values at risk through the physical and visual presence of turbines and potential wind farm noise is incomprehensible.

45. And as a tourist opportunity there are already sufficient opportunities to view turbines, and opportunities to visit non-industrialised areas of elevated landscape have become rare in this area.
46. Will there be anywhere we can go that isn't within sight even sound of one, possibly many turbines or bits of turbines in a single view or framed vista, or sequentially, or in coalescence frenetically turning together but out of time and out of tune.
47. Much has also been made of modernity and the visual wonders of turbines. What when there are too many turbines for them to be remotely interesting, and this technology is outdated and past its use by date.
48. What about the added unattractive clutter of more pylons, monopoles and overhead cables.
49. The only honest way to ascertain what people think is to put the facts before them and for people to respond. For those who sought out the information the submissions process was just such an opportunity, and the response was very clear, but not to MRP.
50. What if this information had been taken out to people. Would those who value panoramic views of the Tararua Range from 18km or more away, who might or might not see the clearly visible existing turbines and their movement extending along 14km of skyline as an intrusion, find a virtual doubling of that effect to be unacceptable?
51. What if all people, not just a "representative" few, within a 5km radius of the wind farm, were to be given a table showing not just the proximity of the nearest turbine, but the number of turbines theoretically in view.
52. The Tararua Range, in widest panoramic view: the central feature between vast plain and vast sky, or as precious snapshot vista, I have been moved to tears by its beauty, and by the anticipation of further loss to wind farm development.
53. In 2008 I was interviewed for an article in the Manawatu Standard. Published on 8 October I was slightly embarrassed to read that I'd talked of losing views of the Tararua Range as if a friend was dying.
54. I'm embarrassed no more. That's exactly how I feel.
55. Grahame Sydney – Artist, puts into words what many feel in their hearts, that: *"landscapes have a power and a meaning far beyond any temporary economics. Landscapes, the natural theatres of our personal experiences and dramas, perform a symbolic and emotional function miles beyond their economic or geographical rationale ... we sometimes only recognise its anchoring in our private depths when it is changed, spoiled or ruined, and then the sense of affront and anger we feel gnaws away at us incessantly."*

From his point of view, too often his paintings have become the only permanent documents of a particular place and the feelings that place had generated, because: *"...in the name of modernity or economic viability the visuals of that landscape have been radically altered, bulldozed into oblivion by the unquestioned engines of progress ... Destruction is fast, the process of building is slow, and Nature is our witness to the truth of that... If we are to preserve the unique landscapes we love,*

and which make us feel and understand the specialness of where we belong, we must begin to put a value on qualities and outcomes which are not necessarily proven in monetary gain. There has to be acceptance of a concept of worth in terms which are not just monetary, and somewhere along the line someone has to accept that change personally, and concede to it with pride, and long view into the future."

Mr Sydney goes on to say that he appreciates that land owners are seeking to make a living, but he also suggests that the word 'ownership' brings with it very dangerous implications: *"...we are not owners ...we are no more than caretakers, brief renters, and I believe we have no right to impose those rapid and too often destructive artificially-sustained changes on landscapes which Nature has sculpted and coloured so slowly, and so appropriately ..."*

... The characteristics which render each of us unique are seldom the product of rational choice. But the decisions which render landscapes unique, which preserve the natural look and balance, or which allow it to be restored and to reclaim its uniqueness on the surface of the earth, these are always the products of rational decision. And these rational decisions always require courage, sometimes sacrifice and, above all, a belief in the final objective."

Mr Sydney concluded his address with a caution not to: *"...focus on the naturally spectacular, the most visited or most celebrated, for much of the meaning we wring from our environment is often from far less majestic places. Landscapes, like ideas, do not have to be celebrated or famous to be meaningful."*¹

¹ *Landscape and Meaning*, Grahame Sydney. Proceedings of High Country Landscape Management Forum September 2005, Otago Regional Council