

Representation to the Turitea Board of Enquiry

Paul Stichbury

Thank you for the opportunity to defend the city from a development which has far reaching consequences.

Setting the scene

- 1 I have lived for a total of 47 years in Palmerston North since arriving in 1957. My father was born here in 1919, our son in 1987. I have spent 32 years teaching in local secondary schools and during my time as a teacher also developed and ran with my wife a Bed and Breakfast business, The Gables, in Fitzherbert Avenue. We did this for 12 years and were featured in the Friars Guide for the Discerning Traveller and the Lonely Planet.
- 2 I know the Turitea area well and until last year owned land at 309 Ngahere Park Road. My wife and I had plans to develop this land for an accommodation venture. While waiting 18 months for the wind farm issue to be resolved our investment made after selling The Gables, and which had been doing very well crashed with a substantial loss. This happened 18 months ago. We then had to sell our land as the unexpected extra years of renting plus paying for our son's education and for the storage of our furniture saw us getting into debt.
- 3 Unexpectedly late last year my wife and I were offered a job in Sydney and we are there to recoup as best we can. If the Turitea wind farm does not proceed we are keen to purchase land in the beautiful Kahuterawa Valley, otherwise we will remain wind farm refugees.
- 4 I am not here to make an issue of the difficulties we have personally faced and to which the wind farm proposal has contributed, nor am I looking for sympathy. This wind farm, in my opinion, is sure to lead to others facing similar difficulties, although not necessarily on the same scale. This issue is far bigger than any one person.
- 5 My commitment to preserving the Turitea and Kahuterawa unspoilt comes from:

My love of the landscape.

My lifelong interest in ornithology and the natural world.

My regular exploring of the area on foot into my 30's while training for road races.
- 6 In my earlier submission I gave considerable detail as to how Palmerston North has become the largely unwitting victim of forces determined to impose this wind farm on the community. I consider that PNCC's Turitea consultation document was a cover for an insincere process as the contract with Mighty River Power had already been signed

and money had changed hands. The consultation document was full of promises, which could never be fulfilled.

- 7 The Minister for the Environment Nick Smith called-in the project, initially claiming it was because PNCC had a conflict of interest, but then changed the reason later to that of needing to meet Kyoto commitments, the result is, of course, the sacrifice of the city's environment for the Emissions Trading Scheme.
- 8 If there is to be a theme to my presentation, perhaps it could be known as the "Pinocchio theme" after the well-known wooden puppet whose nose grew as he lied.

The evidence given by MRP CEO Mr Heffernan re Radiolive interview.

- 9 Under oath Dr Heffernan made this statement to the Board.

MR McCLELLAND: Yes, can you hear me? I just want to check a couple of things quickly. Were you the one that went on Radio Live and said this wind farm was to be the same size as Te Apiti? (INDISTINCT 30 4.38.51)

DR HEFFERNAN: I don't recall the actual interview but I think I do recall being asked about the type of turbines that were likely to be used and I do not ever recall being asked about the size of the wind farm. But I do recall being asked about the size of wind turbines, and I said that I expected that the type of technology would be similar to Te Apiti and therefore of a similar scale.

Audio: Relevant section of the interview. (Note: the full interview is available on the CD provided to the Board.)

- 10 Dr Heffernan has been fully aware of this matter and has chosen not to correct it. In addition he has further misled. Mighty River Power has been a regular visitor to the website Naughty Mr Heffernan, which is provided as a link on

www.palmerston-north.info

See **appendix 1** for a recent sample of times of times when Mighty River Power has visited the website, including making Google searches for my name. See **appendix 2** for a copy of the website "Naughty Mr Heffernan"

- 11 This interview, which was available until late January as a podcast on RadioLive's website, was deleted permanently. No other RadioLive podcasts have been deleted, although the entire RadioLive archive has now been disabled. I do not believe this is a coincidence at this time.
- 12 I stand by my original submission, number 325. Mighty River Power has been caught red handed editing Dominion Post blogs. **See appendix 3.**

Dealings with MRP and PNCC

- 13 MRP came to visit me after I approached PNCC for a meeting. This was just prior to the submissions closing on the Turitea change of purpose. They were evasive and claimed there were many months of testing to be done and that there was no certainty that the wind farm would go ahead. I was right not to believe them as it turned out that all turbine sites had been selected and PNCC, the former Mayor in particular, were fully aware of what was planned. **Appendix 4** shows the lengths to which PNCC were prepared to go to refuse to reveal pertinent information to me, as by now they had fully cemented their relationship with MRP
- 14 **Appendix 5** is an open letter to the Council taking them to task about their relationship with MRP. Mr Naylor has replied ambivalently.
- 15 MRP eventually allowed my wife and I, in early December 2007 after much lobbying, to see a selection of photomontages, which had been shown to the Council. MRP staff were very tense as we viewed them and watched our every move, hovering right over us. I said to Mr Omer, "So, just how are you going to sell this to Palmerston North?" He didn't answer and looked away. MRP had steadfastly refused to make these images available to the Manawatu Standard. There was one photomontage of a single turbine very close to the Pahiatua track. This particular one, to my knowledge, has never been made available to the public. At about this time last year I asked Mr Omer, "Do the residents of Polson Hill know about that one?" His reply was "We haven't told them about that one yet". He also said to me "We don't want to go to the Environment Court." I didn't understand really what he meant by that at the time, but of course we all do now. MRP after closing of submissions admitted in the press that they had maintained an "information vacuum"
- 16 MRP have since then engaged in an expensive media blitz with the sole purpose of impressing you as the decision makers. I consider this to be, quite frankly, amateurish. The "purchase" of the Motorimu consent is laughable as cumulative effects can only be measured against what is proposed, is built and being built. Certainly the affected residents in Linton and Tokomaru will be ecstatic at MRP's desperate generosity. The impact of the proposed wind farm on the city is nothing less than dramatic and is not reduced in any meaningful way by removing an unbuilt Motorimu, which was mostly occupying a basin and with much smaller turbines.

Protection from Fire

- 17 The possibility of an out of control fire is raised on the website. This issue has been studiously ignored. Paragraph 27 is from the Turitea Reserve Management Plan, part one (note the word fire is used 23 times in part one, 42 times in part two, in total 65 times).

"The major catastrophic threat to the Reserve is fire. Major loss of vegetation through fire would impact on the achievement of many objectives under this plan through damage to flora, fauna and

ecosystems and degrading the quality of the water supply. A high level of fire protection and risk management will continue to be required.”

DVD of burning turbine has been provided to the Board

18 The nacelles and blades are made from combustible composites in order to reduce weight. Their gearboxes hold hundreds of litres of oil. On the website I have provided images of burning and burnt out turbines as well as videos of turbines on fire. Manufacturers are naturally loath to have these in general circulation. These fires are impossible to extinguish and they are left to burn out. Fires are caused by mechanical malfunction, electrical shorts, friction and lightning strike. During the summer months the Reserve and Hardings Park become tinder dry. A fire fed by the wind would not only get completely out of control but also severely compromise the city’s water supply and lead to erosion into the Turitea dams potentially rendering them useless over a period of time.

19 The very wide roads proposed through the reserve are there for the frequent need for access to the turbines for repairs and maintenance. The turbines at Tararua three have demonstrated this heavy traffic, which simply increases the fire risk.

20 The placement of substations on Browns flat and elsewhere in the Reserve heightens the risk of fire. The 6 high voltage cables strung across the reserve merely add another potential fire source. **See Appendix 6.**

DVD of substation on fire.

21 Substations can fail and catch fire. I can’t imagine why anyone would risk putting such an installation at a high elevation, let alone allowing the burden of such a failure rest upon draining through private farmland into the Kahuterawa River.

22 This wind farm is not in my view consistent with sound risk management .The issue of fire is a cornerstone theme in the Reserve management document. My wife, Monica Stichbury, who was brought up in a water constrained society has made a heartfelt personal submission to you on this matter. **See submission number 236.**

23 The future development and expansion of Palmerston North.

You are no doubt aware the city has been built largely on a flood plain. This is from an Horizons brochure delivered to city residences.

“As well as pure economic considerations, the social consequences of large scale flooding need to be considered, as was demonstrated in New Orleans in August 2005. Palmerston North does not face a flood hazard on quite that scale, but it could potentially experience a disaster much larger than any Civil Defence emergency experienced to date in New Zealand.”

This wind farm will choke off development on higher land on the Turitea side of the city and leave the city to continue to develop within its highly constrained flood plain footprint.

Turbine collapse and flicker.

- 24 The risk posed by collapsing turbines or turbines shedding blades is covered on www.palmerston-north.info **DVD provided to Board.**
- 25 This turbine, 61 metres high, half the height of those proposed at Turitea collapsed with debris spread over an 800 metre radius on flat land. Turitea turbines on private land are placed very close to public roads, the Pahiatua Track, Turitea Valley road, Greens Road and Kahuterawa Road. As they are double the height of the turbine in the video and on steep land a minimum safe setback would be in the order of 2.5km **See appendix 7.**
- 26 The turbines at Tararua three, at a lower elevation, have been having major problems, including the shedding of a 45m blade. Mr Wong Too in his evidence wisely allows for the possibility that Turitea turbines will fall to bits under the extreme wind regime. Certainly they would not have been able to withstand the huge storm event of 1936, which predates the current fixation on global warming. Mr Wong Too's comments follow in paragraph 38.
- 27 MR WONG TOO: "Yes, and that is the basis of calling the site exceptional. There is, however, something of a risk - if there is such a thing, that there is too much of a good thing and we are above the normal limits. This has not been a problem to date in New Zealand where they have - the turbine manufacturers have gained site specific certification because the wind speeds are outside the normal limits, but we are probably pushing the envelope on the outside here on this site."
- 28 The website has numerous examples of the impact of turbine noise and flicker.

DVD provided to Board.

- 29 There will be times of the year during the morning where turbine flicker from turbines on private land will be a major issue and at other times on the Pahiatua track road.
- 30 The problem is of course, that with the RMA process being truncated by this call-in, the burden has fallen to the Board of Inquiry, and PNCC and Horizons Regional Council have opted out.

31 The mitigation I seek.

No turbines on private land within the city boundary.

The Board to make its own determination, as their conscience allows, as to where or if turbines should be placed within the Reserve itself at all, bearing in mind that the Reserve is a vitally important reservoir not only for water, but also for flora and fauna and that it is the only significant landscape to a city built on a plain.

The foundation of all western law is the dictum "Do unto others as ye would have them do unto you" I expect this to underpin all deliberations on this matter.

Thank you for allowing me to participate in this decision making process.

Paul W Stichbury.