

**BOARD OF INQUIRY
TURITEA WIND FARM PROPOSAL**

In the matter of the Resource Management Act 1991

And

In the matter of a Board of Inquiry appointed under s146 of the Resource Management Act 1991 to consider an application by Mighty River Power Limited for resource consents to construct, operate and maintain a wind farm at Turitea

STATEMENT OF REBUTTAL EVIDENCE OF STEPHEN BROWN

INTRODUCTION

1. My name is Stephen Kenneth Brown. I have already prepared a Primary Statement and Rebuttal Statement in relation to evidence prepared by Di Lucas, Shannon Bray and Clive Anstey. This second rebuttal statement is quite brief and responds to some specific points raised in the Supplementary Statement of Di Lucas.
2. My Primary Statement contains a description of my qualifications and experience in the field of landscape assessment and I confirm that I have prepared this rebuttal evidence in accordance with the Environment Court Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses (July 2006).
3. This statement is confined to just the issue of the Turitea Wind Farm's status as an Outstanding Natural Landscape, or otherwise: it does not address Ms Lucas's other comments in relation to the effects of the proposed wind farm which lie beyond my remit in this case.

THE SKYLINE OF THE TARARUA RANGES

4. On p.3 of her Supplementary Statement, Ms Lucas references RPS Policy 8.3 which sets out to 'protect, from inappropriate development the specified values associated with the skyline of the Tararuas and the scenic qualities that it affords because of its prominence throughout much of the region and its backdrop vista in contrast to the region's plains'. She then goes on to cite RPS 22.3.4 addressing the Tararua Ranges as an ONF/L, stating that the Ranges meet Policy 8.1, Criterion a which states that:

"with respect to major geographical and geological features or landscapes, the degree to which it contributes to the Region's character in terms of:

- i) visual prominence; and*
- ii) scenic characteristics, including views, vistas and backdrops."*

5. Ms Lucas then provides a discourse on her interpretation of 'backdrops' and 'skyline', during which she (para. 16) appears to ascribe the Turitea watershed the status of being the crest and / or summit of the Ranges. She also refers to this 'summit land surface' as being a 'peneplain' and a 'broad summit'. Just as significant, she again references the importance of views to this Skyline from out on the plains both east and west of the Tararuas.
6. I have considered these comments in light of Ms Lucas's Primary Statement, in which she dissects and analyses the landscape around the proposed wind farm site in terms of the modified Pigeon Bay criteria. Much of that analysis relates to the biophysical characteristics of the locality, its cultural meaning and value to tangata whenua. Having reviewed both of those statements, it appears to me that there is a

fundamental contrast between the very specific, view-driven, status of the Tararuas skyline in the regional policy statement and the much broader ONL analysis that Ms Lucas undertakes in her Primary Statement. It is clear that the issue of the Tararua Ranges' ONL status – or otherwise – is founded upon perception of them from the Manawatu Plain and other surrounding areas, not its internal or intrinsic character. Ms Lucas quite eloquently reinforces this point with her discourse on p.4 of her Supplementary Statement.

7. The differences between these two approaches is perhaps reflected in Ms Lucas's para.35 of her Supplementary Statement in which she says "*Ms Williams perhaps misreads my assessment in that I do not assess that the site in total is within an ONL ..*", whereas at para.50 of her Primary Statement Ms Lucas states that: "*From my assessment, and guided somewhat by the statutory regime as discussed below, I assess that the site is within an ONL*".

8. In turning back to Ms Lucas's Primary Statement and her exploration of the landscape values associated with the subject site and the wider Tararua Ranges, I accept that her approach to that analysis may well be correct from a procedural or methodological standpoint, insofar as it goes. However, it manifestly fails to address the critical issue of the thresholds at which a landscape crosses from being an everyday, working landscape into an Amenity or Visual Amenity landscape, or (of more relevance to this application) an Outstanding Landscape or ONL. All landscapes have characteristics that relate to the Modified Pigeon Bay criteria or factors: the question is, just how significant is the sum of those parts and, as a result, are such landscapes truly outstanding. Whereas the Modified Pigeon Bay and WESI (Wakatipu Environmental Society v QLDC case) criteria or landscape factors have received a great deal of attention over recent years, it seems to me that another key facet of the latter case has been rather overlooked. This is where (p.48) the Court refers to the word "outstanding" as meaning:

".. conspicuous, eminent, especially because of excellence remarkable in ..."
(Environment Court Decision C180/99, para.82)

9. I fully appreciate the concern expressed by Ms Lucas about the continuum of native forest at the core of the Tararua Ranges stretching out from the main body of the Tararua Forest Park into Hardings Park, then into Turitea Reserve. But the truth is that if one firstly addresses the views to the Tararua Ranges from east and west (as suggested in the RPS), that part of the Ranges around Turitea, stretching down to Browns Flat, then Shannon, is actually highly modified. Landforms like Awarua and the native forest found within the Turitea and Hardings Park reserve lands certainly have significance when viewed and perceived from 'within' the Ranges or at close hand, but when looking from Palmerston North, Pahiatua, Linton, Feilding, or SH50 the hill country of the northern Tararuas reads as a highly modified patchwork of pasture, pine woodlots and forest, cut-over forestry land (near South Range Rd) and rural-residential development.

10. The native forest at the centre of the Range is visible from many locations, as are pockets of remnant forest tailing down through stream corridors on the eastern side of the Ranges, but the main body of forest (in particular) lacks sufficient elevation to pull it clear of the working landscape matrix on the Ranges' periphery and lend it substance in its own right. As a result, the forest within Turitea Reserve, and even much of Harding Park, displays insufficient visual presence to impose its natural (or natural science) values on the wider Ranges landscape and lend it the coherence, unity and overall spectacle (legibility, expressiveness, shared values) that I associate with 'self-evidently' outstanding landscapes.
11. Associated with this, the often dramatic topographic relief found within the water catchment of Turitea Reserve and Hardings Park, is effectively buffered from the Manawatu Plain especially by the much more rounded, weathered, even somnolent profile of the foothills on which most of the modification that I have just described is located. The true spine of the Tararua Ranges only starts to emerge between Browns Flat and Shannon, in the vicinity of Ngawhakarara (855m), and becomes even more apparent closer to Levin.
12. Consequently, as I make clear in my Primary Statement, it is the confluence of an emerging topographic 'backbone' with the related elevation of the Tararuas' native forest that gives rise to what I regard as being a truly Outstanding Natural Landscape: a landscape that is clearly conspicuous and eminent. This landscape starts to become truly apparent south of the proposed wind farm site in my assessment, as identified in my Primary Statement. From my point of view, this suggests that the Skyline of the Tararuas is only truly outstanding where it expresses the values that I have just outlined and which I describe in more detail in my Primary Statement. I must reiterate, however, that I regard the upper mantle of foothills and ridges around Turitea – that coalesce to form a 'skyline' – as retaining significant amenity value, particularly in relation to views from the Manawatu Plain and the Mangatainoka River valley east of the Tararuas.
13. To put this in context, I have also identified numerous such transitions from Outstanding to Amenity landscapes in my evaluation of many of the river systems that also hallmark many of the landscapes found within the combined Manawatu / lower Rangitikei and Tararua 'sub-region', including the Rangitikei, Manawatu and Pohangina Rivers. Just as my assessment has responded to changes in those landscape features, it has responded to the significant changes in the character and values of the Tararua Ranges and their margins.

THE TARARUA FOREST PARK

14. Ms Lucas also quotes from the RPS's identification of the Tararua State Forest Park as an Outstanding Natural Feature in terms of RPS Policy 8.3 q., with particular reference made to the Park's recreational and ecological values. Thus, as with the Skyline of the Tararuas, Ms Lucas identifies the Forest Park as being a section 6b landscape.
15. Again, I don't dispute this definition from a technical standpoint. However, I consider that the ONL boundary has far more to do with the Forest Park's ecological and recreational attributes than landscape, which is more multi-faceted and, as I have just explained, retains a significant perceptual component. Applying the same criteria and approach that I have applied to the much wider sub-regional to regional area around the Turitea site, I therefore regard the narrow strip of State Forest Park near South Range Rd as an anomalous part of Policy 8.3's ONF. For all of the reasons that I have previously explained, it remains my opinion that the ONL / ONF boundary should lie south of the subject site, not down its eastern margin.

ONL SCALES

16. Finally, I note that Ms Lucas comments on the various scales of landscape assessment and ONL identification that go on in the country – in her para.34. I don't regard the distinction between regional, sub-regional or district landscape scales as being quite as clear-cut as she suggests, however. For example, the Auckland Region is much more akin to most rural districts in terms of its extent, whereas the Waikato Region – stretching from the banks of the Waikato River to the slopes of Mt Ruapehu – covers a range of landscape character types that is probably more diverse than those of the entire lower half of the North Island. Regional, district and cadastral boundaries don't provide a very good gauge of landscape scales on the ground.
17. With reference to my assessment for this project, it is true that I had to carefully consider whether or not to include a number of small scale features, typically individual stands of remnant forest and wetland pockets of quite limited extent, such as a DoC wetland / bush reserve just north of Porewa bordering SH1. In the end, I decided against getting down to this level of detail. Nevertheless, as should be apparent from looking at my Annexures 3 and 4, many of the ONLs, ONFs and Amenity Landscapes that I have identified still address relatively small scale stands of bush on individual ridges and hill faces (eg. around Alfredton), the small scale dune lakes north of Otaki and even the very narrow defile of the Hautapu River south of Taihape. If I had been undertaking a district landscape assessment, it may well be that some other features would have been added to the landscape / features that I have identified, but I am not so certain that the fundamental differentiation between ONLs / ONFs, Amenity Landscapes and

Other Landscapes would have changed that markedly. In my opinion, the criteria and thresholds that I have applied are sufficiently rigorous to provide clear guidance about where the Outstanding and Amenity Landscapes can be found within the catchment that I assessed, and a supposed re-scaling or – in actuality – re-labelling of the exercise would not appreciably change that outcome from my point of view.

18. Consequently, I still believe that my identification of such landscapes is as accurate as current assessment methodologies – with all their frailties (at least in some people’s minds) and different theoretical bases – allow.

Stephen Brown

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BTP, Dip LA, Fellow NZILA, Affiliate NZPI