

8 July 2008

Precedent No. Blank

Matter Description Project Hayes – Philip Gurnsey rebuttal_evidence

REBUTTAL EVIDENCE OF PHILIP FREDERICK GURNSEY

1. My full name is Philip Frederick Gurnsey. I have already submitted a statement of evidence in relation to these proceedings. That statement is dated 29 May 2008.

Scope of evidence

2. This evidence is supplementary to my original statement of evidence. It provides a rebuttal to statements in relation to climate change made by experts on behalf of the appellants.
3. I am authorised to give this evidence by the Minister for the Environment (Hon Trevor Mallard) on behalf of the Crown. The Crown opposes the appeals challenging the decisions to grant the resource consents sought by Meridian Energy in relation to the proposed Project Hayes Wind Farm.

Correction of errors in original statement of evidence

4. Before I discuss climate change, I wish to correct some errors inadvertently made in my original statement of evidence:
 - 4.1 The heading after paragraph 51 should read “Central Otago District Plan and the Otago Regional Policy Statement and the 2004 amendments to the RMA” (not “Clutha District Plan”); and
 - 4.2 Paragraph 52 should also refer to the Central Otago District Plan, not the Clutha District Plan.
5. I also wish to clarify paragraph 20 of my original statement where I state that the Crown submission in support of the Project Hayes Wind Farm was the second time a Crown submission had been lodged in support of a resource consent application, the first being for the Mahinerangi Wind Farm. In fact, while the Mahinerangi Wind Farm has been heard in the Environment Court first, the Crown’s original submission to the relevant councils on the Project Hayes Wind Farm was lodged before the Crown submission to the relevant councils on the Mahinerangi Wind Farm was lodged. Furthermore the council hearing for Project Hayes was held before that for Mahinerangi.

Is climate change occurring and a result of human actions?

6. Statements of evidence have been provided to the Court from experts that question the human effect, if any, on global climate change; in particular statements on behalf of the appellant Roch Patrick Sullivan by:
 - 6.1 Kesten C Green
 - 6.2 Professor Robert M Carter
 - 6.3 Dr Christopher R de Freitas
7. The New Zealand government is of the view that climate change is real, is happening now and requires a response. This approach is based on the majority opinion of the international scientific community that human activities have resulted in substantial global warming from the mid-20th century, and that continued growth in greenhouse gas concentrations caused by human-induced emissions will generate high risks of dangerous climate change.
8. The rapid development of climate-related research and modelling has allowed increasingly more definitive assessments of the human impacts on climate. The Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released in 2007 noted an improvement in the scientific understanding of the influence of human activity on climate change.
9. The IPCC report concluded that the warming of the climate system is 'unequivocal', that there is a greater than 90 per cent chance that 'the global average net effect of human activities since 1750 has been one of warming'. Confidence in the influence of humans on other elements of climate change, such as droughts and severe weather events, is not as high, but is increasing as modelling techniques and observation databases improve.

10. The recently released Garnaut Report¹ in Australia has this to say about those who consider the IPCC to be unreliable as evidence:

Some people with relevant scientific credentials (and many who lack them) argue that the warming trend may be mainly the result of factors independent of human activity—the same factors that have been responsible for a continuously changing global climate throughout the earth's history. However, those who argue against a strong human influence in the contemporary warming trend are a small minority of scientists with competence in relevant fields. If there are natural as well as anthropogenic causes of recent warming, it is not obvious that this would reduce the urgency or importance of reducing anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions. It could be argued that the presence of additional sources of warming actually increases the importance of early and strong action to moderate the contributions over which humans have some control. This perspective argues most strongly for more scientific research on natural sources of climate change and their interaction with anthropogenic global warming.

11. The New Zealand government has adopted the findings of the IPCC as the basis for policy making and the inclusion of section 7(i) of the RMA is a direct result of that policy. I wish to reiterate paragraphs 23 to 46 of my original statement of evidence in relation to the New Zealand government's climate change objectives, and its international obligations.

Need to take action now

12. The reasons for taking action now are obvious. Not acting on climate change now will cost us more later.
13. New Zealand, like the rest of the world, faces two major energy challenges. The first is to respond to the risks of climate change by reducing the greenhouse gases caused by the production and use of

1. The Garnaut Climate Change Review has been commissioned by Australia's Commonwealth, state and territory governments to examine the impacts, challenges and opportunities of climate change for Australia. A Draft Report was released on 4 July 2008, and the Final Report is due by 30 September 2008. The statement is from the Draft Report.

energy. The second is to deliver clean, secure, affordable energy while treating the environment responsibly.

14. Early action is more cost effective than later action, and so actions such as the construction of the Project Hayes Wind Farm are encouraged. Renewable energy projects are needed to: increase New Zealand's electricity generation capacity, avoid, reduce or displace greenhouse gas emissions, and increase security of supply. We want to avoid locking in fossil fuel use as base load supply for the long term. The construction of the Project Hayes Wind Farm achieves this objective.
15. As addressed in my evidence in chief, Project Hayes will have significant national benefits in terms of the issues of climate change and the use of renewable sources of energy being matters for consideration in terms of section 5 of the RMA.
16. Faced with sufficient consensus on climate change science, responsible government must act to address the risks for New Zealand's vulnerable environment, economy and way of life. While action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions over the long term will have a moderate cost, the predicted costs and risks of inaction are expected to be unacceptably high.
17. Effective international action is needed to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions. To support and encourage international action, New Zealand needs to play its part in reducing emissions as well as encouraging other countries, especially the major emitters, to act.
18. New Zealand's response should maximise the economic advantages of using energy and resources more efficiently. New and newly economic technologies such as wind farms will play a crucial role.