

IN THE MATTER of the Resource Management Act 1991

AND

IN THE MATTER of resource consent applications for the
Ashburton Community Water Trust Scheme

STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF BILL BURROWS

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 My full name is **Frederick Harold William Burrows**. I am the sole Director of Burrows Farms Limited, the majority shareholder, and authorised to speak on behalf of the company.
- 1.2 Farming has been part of the Burrows family as long as I can remember. My Grandfather George farmed in Harewood, Christchurch, and my father Fred carried on farming in the Harewood area.
- 1.3 As long as I can remember, all I ever wanted to do was be a farmer. Both parents supported this and Mum, in particular, said it was good idea but education came first. It was a privilege to be able to attend St Andrews College as they had an agricultural course. Through school, learning with like-minded people we had the opportunity to visit farms on field trips. I can remember one such farm trip in the 5th form. We went to four farms in the Barrhill, Lauriston, and Methven areas. One farm was T I Perry's "Balraizie" at Barrhill. I thought the area, soils, the snow covered mountains and the mighty Rakaia River was absolutely magnificent. Ever since that farm visit my dream was to farm in that area.
- 1.4 After leaving school Dad and I continued working together and we started leasing additional land in order to raise the deposit and turn this dream into reality. Land in this area was sought after and rarely available. The first opportunity came in 1978. We continued working and in 1986 the Gilpin Blocks became available. I remember Dad saying "If you don't try and buy this land, don't bother looking at any other". It was a rare opportunity as the Gilpin family had farmed the land since 1928.
- 1.5 The versatile soils are naturally fertile and have good moisture retention capabilities, yet remain free draining. Over the years it has produced very good crops and it is always a pleasure to work there. Dad commented one time "this place is like a park". Being able to stand on the riverbank and see the mighty Rakaia. On a clear day, to the right, you can see the Rakaia River Bridge and to the left, the magnificent Mt Hutt. Without a doubt as land goes, this is the "Jewel in the Crown".

2. **THE BOTTOM BLOCK**

- 2.1 Burrows Farms Limited owns and operates several blocks of land in the Highbank area. One farm known as the "Bottom Block" (35 hectares), which was formerly Gilpins, is directly affected by this proposed scheme. It supports the whole farming operation.
- 2.2 My father bought the Bottom Block in 1986. He passed on in 1989 and Burrows Farms Limited subsequently purchased the property from my mother. Hopefully my son William who is now 12 years old will recognise the opportunities presented to him and carry on the Burrows family farming tradition.
- 2.3 The farm adjoins the Rakaia riverbank. The soil type for the property is kowhai silt loam and the property is situated in an area which has an average rainfall of 36 inches. The soil is extremely versatile and currently used for a number of purposes.
- 2.4 It is used for trading stock and lamb fattening post-harvest. However, the primary use of the block is for arable/cropping purposes. It is an un-irrigated piece of land. We grow wheat, peas, rye grass, barley, potatoes and crops such as radish, mustard and grass seed and white clover seed for export. We have strict quarantine and quality control requirements to ensure that the seed is suitable for export.
- 2.5 The farm has magic views and the "WOW" factor. It is a lovely place to work. It is wonderful to own.
- 2.6 It would be impossible to replace this piece of land. Buying other land is difficult due to the inflated prices resulting from corporate farming. The soil is particularly valuable south of the river.

3. **EFFECTS OF THE SCHEME**

- 3.1 There has been some consultation with ACWT representatives. Most of this consultation has taken place shortly before this hearing. ACWT have talked about having a liaison person to work with landowners during construction. I have been told by ACWT that any of the more specific matters around land acquisition, specific access and survey are, apparently, to form discussion after this hearing. We have been advised that land acquisition is not part of the current resource consent process and, unlike Central Plains Water Limited, ACWT is not currently seeking the right to take land 'by decree'. I would be concerned if this changed in the future so that our land could be taken in this way.

- 3.2 We are likely to lose a reasonable amount of land, approximately one third of the Bottom Block (11.5 hectares out of a total of 35 hectares). Land of this quality cannot be easily replaced. The proposal also appears to isolate the land next to the river. These blocks will be effectively cut off from the rest of the property. It is not practical to have to access my land from neighbours' properties. I also need to be able to ensure that I can get on with farming without having to deal with construction machines.
- 3.3 It appears that there may be disruption from loss of fences and the size of machinery that will be necessary to carry out the earth moving exercise. I would be concerned if heavy machinery and contractor activity occurred on our property. In my submission I also raised concerns about the possibility of spoil being placed on my property.
- 3.4 I am particularly concerned about the use of vehicles where weeds and other undesirable seeds are transported onto our property, given the strict quarantine and quality control requirements for the seed that we grow for export purposes.
- 3.5 I am also concerned about the dust, access, and timeframe issues associated with construction.
- 3.6 Landscaping parts of the proposal with planting may introduce undesirable plants that may affect our seed export capabilities. Specialised seed production would require selecting species that are compatible with my farming operations. I would be concerned if noxious weeds seeded in the construction area and drifted onto surrounding farmland.
- 3.7 I can see merit in the scheme and I appreciate and acknowledge Ashburton Community Water Trust for trying to work in with landowners. I thank them for that. After several meetings with Ashburton Community Water Trust, they have tried hard to address our concerns and produced a discussion document. Should this document be used to be part of the conditions of the resource consent most of our concerns regarding the effects on the surrounding environment would be addressed.
- 3.8 I assume that these matters will be sorted out with conditions, if consent is granted. That does not of course address the fact that I stand to lose a fair amount of land if this scheme proceeds.

Bill Burrows
September 2008