

## **EDWARD ELLISON – SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE FOR OTAGO PROPOSED REGIONAL POLICY STATEMENT: FRESHWATER PLANNING PART**

1. My name is Edward Ellison. I was raised at Ōtākou in our whānau home, Te Waipounamu, on our ancestral lands that abut and overlook Otago Harbour and I am the current Upoko for Te Rūnanga o Ōtākou. I was one of two mana whenua representatives on the Otago Regional Council Strategy and Planning Committee during the development of the Proposed Regional Policy Statement 2021, and currently represent the Otago Rūnaka on the Otago Regional Council Land and Water Regional Plan Governance Group. Since my evidence was lodged I have been appointed as an iwi representative and Co-Chair of the Otago Regional Council Environmental Science and Policy Committee.
2. My evidence describes the foundational values and relationship with wai māori that underlies the input provided by Kāi Tahu ki Otago to the Proposed Regional Policy Statement. It also outlines the experiences and concerns that inform our environmental priorities as kaitiaki and our submission on the freshwater provisions.
3. Mana-i-te-whenua are dedicated to the sustainable management of resources and the achievement of sound environmental outcomes. Our overarching objective is to build a stronger environmental, economic, social, and cultural base for our people - mō tātou, ā, mō kā uri ā muri ake nei. We have worked in partnership with ORC to ensure that our values and interests are represented and reflected in the freshwater provisions.

### **Te Mana o te Wai**

4. At paragraphs [14] and [15] I explain the development of the Kāi Tahu ki Otago interpretation of Te Mana o te Wai. This interpretation is rooted in mana, tapu, mauri, whakapapa, the interconnectedness of the elements of te taiao, and the rights and obligations of rakatiratāka and kaitiakitāka, and I discuss these matters at paragraphs [17] to [39].
5. The mana of the wai – and of all the elements of te taiao - has its source with the spiritual authority of the atua at the point of creation. The mana of the people and that of the natural environment in their takiwā are intrinsically linked, and the failure to secure the sustainability of a resource or habitat has a detrimental impact on the mana.
6. The mauri of water is a life-giving force that connects the environment from the mountains to the sea. Each water body has its own unique identity or mauri, which reflects the landscape and natural characteristics of the water bodies and catchments. Waterbodies with a healthy or strong mauri are characterised by good quality waters that flow with energy and life,

sustain healthy ecosystems, and support mahika kai and other cultural activities. The primary resource management principle for Kāi Tahu is the protection of mauri.

7. Every natural element, including wai māori, possesses a level of tapu derived from their connection to and deeds of atua and tīpuna. The obligation to respect and protect the wai is derived from the significant tapu of the natural environment arising from antiquity and connection to kā Ātua. The concept of tapu requires the balancing of rights and responsibilities, with prohibitions and restrictions operating much as any legal system.
8. The resource management approach of ki uta ki tai is an expression of whanaukataka, which emphasises the holistic management of the interrelated elements within the natural environment. The interconnected nature of the whenua, wai māori and the moana mean that the management of land-based activities has direct consequences for rivers, lakes, wetlands and the coastal environment, and land must be managed with this in mind.
9. Kāi Tahu are bound by whakapapa to the land, water and all life supported by them. This whakapapa relationship gives rise to the rights inherent in rakatirataka and the associated and fundamental duties of kaitiakitaka. Rakatirataka and kaitiakitaka thus sit at the heart of Te Mana o te Wai for mana whenua.

### **Kāi Tahu ki Otago freshwater vision**

10. At paragraphs [40] to [43] I describe the development of the Kāi Tahu ki Otago freshwater vision to feed into development of the freshwater visions in the Proposed Regional Policy Statement. The Kāi Tahu ki Otago freshwater vision is informed by the relationship of mana whenua to wai māori, and by our kaitiakitaka obligation to restore the mauri of the wai. It recognises that, although each relationship is unique to a particular water body, those relationships are based on common values and principles that apply to all water bodies.
11. At paragraphs [44] to [60] I discuss some key aspects of the relationship with wai, including wāhi tūpuna, mahika kai and the relationship with taoka species, and I provide examples to illustrate these. The vision statement in Appendix 3 of my evidence describes the outcomes that will need to be achieved to restore the mauri of Otago's water bodies and to ensure the distinctive relationships of whānau and hapū to each water body can endure and thrive.

### **The need for change**

12. Our experience is that past and current management of freshwater is not consistent with this vision. At paragraphs [61] to [70] I discuss the many types of degradation we have seen in our water bodies, and the impacts of this on our economy, our communities, our mana and

our cultural identity. If we do not start to make real change in direction to reverse the degradation before another generation passes, it will be too late – we will lose the opportunity to pass on our mātauraka to our rakatahi so that they can learn how to harvest and care for mahika kai and to sustain cultural practices. To avoid this happening, we consider there needs to be an immediate stop to the loss of wetlands, river extent and habitats, and a change in management practices to support Te Mana o te Wai within ten years, so that we can see the vision outcomes being achieved within the current generation.

### **Specific concerns**

13. My evidence also explains some specific freshwater management concerns that relate to our understanding of mauri and of tikaka and kawa.
14. The first of these is our concern about direct discharge of human and animal effluent to water bodies. This is contrary to tikaka and kawa and renders affected waterways inaccessible for customary practices such as harvesting and eating mahika kai or using water for cultural purposes and rituals. Instead, Kāi Tahu support natural mixing of wastewater through the cleansing and purifying processes of Papatūānuku. In order for the mauri of the water to be fully restored it needs to go through the processes of "kia whitikia e te rā, kia purea e te hau, kia horoia e te ua, ā, kia hurihia e ngā kōwhatu - to be shone upon by the sun, to be purified by the wind, to be washed by the rain, and to be tumbled by the rocks."
15. The second concern relates to cross-mixing of water between different water bodies. Our understanding is that the transfer of water between water bodies and catchments impacts on the mauri of each water body by changing the characteristics of the wai. It augments one system and depletes the other, and can also impact on the ecosystems and water quality of the receiving waters. The way in which it is appropriate to address this issue will vary from situation to situation but mana whenua must be involved in determining the appropriate approach to be taken.

### **Conclusion**

16. Implementation of Te Mana o te Wai through the freshwater provisions in the Proposed Regional Policy Statement provides a one in a generation opportunity to re-set the management of wai māori in a way that aligns with the tikaka and kawa that have been developed over generations by mana whenua. Our success in implementing Te Mana o te Wai and in restoring the natural balance of te taiao will be measured in outcomes for the current generations and the generations that follow.