

BRENDAN FLACK – SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE FOR OTAGO PROPOSED REGIONAL POLICY STATEMENT: FRESHWATER PLANNING PART

1. My name is Brendan Flack. I reside at Puketeraki, Karitāne and am a Takata Tiaki for Puketeraki Marae. I am chair of the East Otago Taiāpure Management Committee. I sit on the Komiti Kaupapa Taiao and Puketeraki Komiti Rapu Ara Hau. As a whānau, we are actively involved in habitat restoration and fisheries recovery along Te Tai o Ārai-te-uru (the Otago coastline) and in its catchments. I am a contractor for the Ngāi Tahu Undaria Control Programme, a researcher on the He Pātaka Wai Ora Project, Pou Tuarā for the Coastal People: Southern Skies CoRE, and I work for Te Tiaki Mahinga Kai.
2. My evidence discusses the deep and enduring spiritual connection that Kāti Huirapa ki Puketeraki have to the Waikōuaiti River, our paramount awa. This awa and its estuarine wetlands have provided nourishment for our people for generations. The wetlands at Tauraka o Poti (Merton Tidal Arm) were particularly valued by our tīpuna for the bountiful tuna, mōhoao, waterfowl, and as a spawning ground for īnaka.
3. Other awa and coastal estuaries of significance to our hapū include Waiputai (Blueskin) Bay, Pūrākaunui inlet, Matainaka (Hawksbury Lagoon), Te Hakapupu (Pleasant River and Estuary), and the Waihemo (Shag River).
4. I discuss the interconnectedness between land and water and between wai māori and wai tai, and how this is recognised in the concept of ki uta ki tai. Ki uta ki tai recognises that all environmental elements are interconnected and must be managed as a whole - what happens on the land impacts on what happens in the water, both wai māori and wai tai. The past, present, and future of our awa and coastal estuaries are also connected and our aspirations for their management are intergenerational.
5. We, as kaitiaki, do not have a problem with understanding the interconnectedness of the whole river catchment, and the connection between what happens in our rivers and what happens on the coast. As kaitiaki, we are in the coastal environment daily, and I discuss the changes in the health of the wai and mahika kai that we have seen happening over time as a result of activities happening on the land.¹
6. Impacts on freshwater from fertiliser use, mining, wastewater discharges, combined with other pressures, have meant that our traditional mahika kai areas are disappearing. If our

¹ See paragraphs [22]-[25] and [34] of my evidence.

mahika kai species disappear, we cannot pass our mātauraka down to the next generation or use mahika kai to reconnect our whānau that have become disconnected from their own cultural practices.

7. My evidence describes the mahi that we are undertaking using taiāpure and mātaikai management tools, and also through He Pātaka Wai Ora, to reinvigorate our rakatirataka and our kaitiakitaka over the awa, estuaries and coastal waters within our takiwā.² Our vision is to restore the hauora and mauri of mahika kai habitats and build up thriving and abundant populations of mahika kai species so they will be resilient to the challenges of the future.
8. The effectiveness of our restoration and research efforts is being hindered by the impacts of sedimentation, low water flows, water contamination and structures such as flood gates. The cost of this to us is that we need to continue focusing on restoration of the awa and mahika kai rather than being able to harvest kai to sustain whānau physically and culturally.
9. Te Mana o te Wai provides a positive shift towards protecting and restoring the health and well-being of the awa within our takiwā. The challenge for the Regional Policy Statement is to provide clear direction on the responsibilities of land and water users to give effect to Te Mana o te Wai, and to provide for integrated management of wai māori and wai tai.
10. The current boundaries of the Freshwater Management Units (FMU) do not support integrated management within our takiwā. I discuss the need to shift the boundary between the North Otago and Dunedin and Coast FMUs to recognise the interconnection between the Waikouaiti Mātaitai Reserve and the East Otago Taiāpure and enable integrated management of wai māori and wai tai.³ It is also important that the FMU boundaries include estuarine systems. The health of the estuarine habitats can only be restored by managing what happens in the catchments that feed them.

² See paragraphs [27]-[38] of my evidence.

³ See paragraphs [44]-[47] of my evidence.