

**Before an Independent Hearings Panel**

**The Proposed Waikato District Plan (Stage 1)**

**IN THE MATTER OF** the Resource Management Act 1991 (**RMA**)

**IN THE MATTER OF** hearing submissions and further submissions on the Proposed Waikato District Plan (Stage 1):  
**Topic 25 – Zone Extents**

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**EVIDENCE SUMMARY**  
**JENNIFER CAROLYN SHANKS ON BEHALF OF CSR POKENO WEST LTD**

**(Ecology)**

**12 May 2021**

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Counsel Instructed:  
Peter Fuller  
LLB, MPlan, DipEnvMgt, BHortSc.  
Barrister  
Quay Chambers  
Level 7, 2 Commerce Street  
PO Box 106215  
Auckland 1143  
021 635 682  
Email: peter.fuller@quaychambers.co.nz

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

My full name is Jennifer Carolyn Shanks, I am a Consultant Ecologist and Director of JS Ecology Ltd, based in Bombay. I have the qualifications and experience set out in my evidence in chief.

### **Code of conduct**

I have read the Environment Court's Code of Conduct and agree to comply with it. My qualifications as an expert are set out above. I confirm that the issues addressed in this statement of evidence are within my area of expertise except where I state that I am relying upon the specified evidence of another person. I have not omitted to consider material facts known to me that might alter or detract from the opinions that I express.

## **2 SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE**

- 2.1 The 160 hectare site is predominantly grazed, improved pasture with seasonally some large areas of maize grown along the stream floodplain. A range of ecologically damaging land use practices have degraded wetlands, watercourses and native vegetation across the site.
- 2.2 Although a few stands of native trees and small areas of identified Significant Natural Area (SNA) are found at the site, botanical values and terrestrial habitat values were assessed as being generally low across the site.
- 2.3 The Tanitewhiora Stream and the network of tributaries that feed into it with their associated wetlands are the key ecological features of the site. These habitats will be retained, protected and enhanced as part of the proposed development.
- 2.4 Key water quality parameters and aquatic habitat values have been visually assessed as being low.
- 2.5 Watercourses and wetlands are generally open to grazing with associated loss of native vegetation, pugging and bank erosion. Cultivation along the main Tanetiwhiora Stream has resulted in channelization of the stream, bank erosion and sediment mobilisation.
- 2.6 Cessation of farming and implementation of the proposed riparian restoration planting contained in the proposed concept plan for the site will deliver valuable ecological benefits to freshwater habitats through bank stabilisation, stream shading and filtration of overland flows to the streams.

- 2.7 Proposed off-line stormwater wetlands can provide substantial areas of additional wetland habitat if planted sympathetically with appropriate native wetland plants.
- 2.8 The proposed network of riparian corridors and wetland restoration along watercourses will connect with and enhance existing SNAs and native vegetation across the site. There will also be connectivity with other areas of SNA and native habitat that occur both upstream and downstream of the site, which will provide habitat connectivity and migration pathways for native species across the wider landscape.
- 2.8 Although the urbanisation of the site will fundamentally change its rural landscape character as set out in the evidence of Mr Pryor, there will be a minor shift away from baseline conditions in terms of the key ecological features of the site because these ecological features will be retained and enhanced.
- 2.9 The Environmental Institute of Australia and New Zealand (EIANZ) has published guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) for use in New Zealand<sup>1</sup>. An EclA was undertaken according to the EIANZ guidelines as set out in my primary evidence. The expected overall level of ecological effects is assessed as low over the long term (15+ years) under the EIANZ criteria and guidelines. This assessment assumes best practice protocols for stormwater management, erosion and sediment control are followed and proposed ecological management is undertaken.
- 2.10 A detailed site-wide Ecological Management Plan would be expected to be required at the resource consent stage of development and this plan would be required to demonstrate the principle of "No Net Loss" of biodiversity in accordance with best practice biodiversity offsetting guidelines<sup>2</sup>. In addition legislation under the National Environmental Standards for Freshwater (NES-FW 2020) contains strong legal protection for wetlands. Therefore I am confident that the anticipated environmental outcomes will be realised.
- 2.11 The development of the site will not negatively impact the Whangamarino Wetland RAMSAR site nor any other downstream habitats such as the Mangatawhiri Swamp or the Waikato River. Sufficient environmental controls exist within the Waikato District Plan, the Waikato Regional Plan and other statutory documents to ensure there are no adverse environmental effects on local ecosystems.

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<sup>1</sup> **Environmental Institute of Australia and New Zealand (EIANZ) 2015**: Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA): EIANZ Guidelines for use in New Zealand terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems. EIANZ, Melbourne, Australia.

<sup>2</sup> **NZ Government (August 2014)** Guidance on Good Practice Biodiversity Offsetting. <http://www.doc.govt.nz/about-us/our-policies-and-plans/guidance-on-biodiversity-offsetting/#4>

- 2.12 The conversion of rural land to urban use at Pokeno West – Munro Block can be managed to provide significant biodiversity benefits to the site. Currently degraded terrestrial and freshwater habitats can be protected, restored and enhanced as part of the development process, providing biodiversity benefits to the wider landscape.
- 2.13 I support on ecological grounds the conclusions of the S42A Report prepared by David Mead for Waikato District Council (April 2021) that the West Pokeno Munro Block should be re-zoned Residential.

Jennifer Shanks  
MSc Hons MEIANZ

Director  
JS Ecology Ltd

12 May 2021