

**BEFORE INDEPENDENT HEARING COMMISSIONERS
AT NAPIER & WAIPAWA**

**I MUA NGĀ KAIKŌMIHANA WHAKAWĀ MOTUHAKE
KI AHURIRI & WAIPAWA**

IN THE MATTER

of the Resource Management Act 1991

AND

IN THE MATTER

of the hearing of submissions on applications for
the take and use of water from the Ruataniwha
Basin.

**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF HELEN ELLIS
ON BEHALF OF APPLICANTS**

31 OCTOBER 2022

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Thank you for allowing me to address the hearing.

1.2 My name is Helen Ellis and along with my husband Richard, our son William and his wife Kirsty, and our daughter Olivia, we farm 330 ha (known as “Papawai”) on Highway 50, at OngaOnga. Sadly, we lost our second son in an accident down in Ashburton while he was working for Waterforce.

1.3 We have lived and worked on Papawai for the past 27 years. We farm Papawai in conjunction with 565 ha at Otane, where we lived and started our married life, and a third smaller block at Hatuma that Richard and I intend to retire on.

1.4 Richard is a 3rd generation farmer in Central Hawke’s Bay and Dannevirke. I also come from a farming family in Whanganui. My father passed away 4 years ago (he was still farming at the age of 90).

1.5 As our children have said to us, farming is in their DNA and they are keen to become the next generation of farmers in the family. William is currently working for a large farming enterprise in the Manawatu. His wife Kirsty is off a farm at Taihape and is a Rural Account Manager for ANZ. Our daughter Olivia is the Operations Manager for Kelso – a sheep genetics company.

1.6 Richard and I have always viewed ourselves as progressive and responsible farmers. We take a great deal of pride in producing high quality produce from the land while also looking after it for the future. But we believe our children have the qualifications and relevant experience to take our farming systems to the next level and we are in the process of working through a succession plan so that they can return to the area and continue to evolve our family farming operations.

2. ONGAONGA COMMUNITY

2.1 Richard and I are so lucky to be able to do what we love in an amazing community – OngaOnga and our larger community of Central Hawke’s Bay.

With having lived in Otane, now OngaOnga and then to Hatuma, we feel very passionate about staying here in the area. Our children went to the local OngaOnga Primary school, while there, Richard sat on the Board of Trustees for 6 years. We are still involved with the school, just the other day Richard was asked to help with the 7 aside rugby tournament, of which 26 schools were involved.

- 2.2 As with any small community, locals are what make and keep a community going, as we do with our little Anglican church in the village. We are also both closely involved with, and life members of, the sheep section of the CHB A & P Association. Richard has chaired the sheep section for the past 20 years.

3. OUR FARMING OPERATION AT PAPA WAI

- 3.1 The farm comprises 330 ha and is located on the south bank of the Waipawa River, roughly half way between Tikokino and OngaOnga. We have a 2.3 km boundary with the Waipawa River which is fully fenced along the vegetated river margin (on council reserve land).
- 3.2 Papawai was a mixed dry cropping and livestock farm when we purchased it in 1995. We first introduced irrigation onto the land in 2000 with a single pivot and progressively developed the system over the next 15 years to irrigate 265 ha using 4 pivots. Though only 2/4 pivots can be used at any one time given water constraints.
- 3.3 The land contour is 100% flat and comprises fantastic growing soils (including Takapau silt loam). Under the Land Use Capability system, most of the land is classified as class 2 and 3, with a limited amount of class 1.
- 3.4 Irrigation water (currently a combination of both directly held and temporarily leased Tranche 1 water) has made it feasible for us to grow - beans, sweetcorn, and peas for Mc Cains and also Malting Barley for Malteurop in Marton. As we are a mixed farming operation, we also farm trading lambs, steers and mixed aged ewes for breeding.

- 3.5 In terms of land use, approximately 70% of our production comes from sheep, 10% cattle, 10% forage cropping, 5% vegetables and 5% arable cropping.
- 3.6 The parameters in which we farm are already tightly governed by both District and Regional Councils, Nait,ASUREQuality and the list goes on. We also understand, and are conscious of, increasing expectations of community (including manawhenua) in terms of better environmental performance. In response, we regularly look to ways that we can reduce our footprint while remaining profitable, this is helped with our Farm Environmental Management Plan (FEMP).
- 3.7 We are currently operating under our second FEMP (completed by Perrin Ag in February 2021 and peer reviewed by Rural Directions). Perrin Ag took us through a thorough planning process including soil testing every paddock and analysing farm production over all our land holdings. We proactively use our FEMP as a farm management tool (of increased importance with farm succession planning), not just as a compliance requirement.
- 3.8 So, with this in mind we undertake strip tillage on our lighter soils, cultivating only the narrow planting strips and leaving the majority of the paddock uncultivated. This practice reduces wind and soil erosion and assists to maintain soil strength and good levels of humus/organic matter. We also monitor our soil moisture levels and with our yearly planning, we look at crop rotations, fertiliser and soil testing.
- 3.9 We also closely monitor the 'real-world' water requirements of crops that we grow. For example, we recently changed out one of our fodder crops (Fodder Beet) that required a large amount of water to get it established, in order to make the best use of our available water.

4. IMPORTANCE OF T2 WATER

- 4.1 We seek the T2 water to replace the existing leased T1 water. The potential production options that could open up to Papawai if we had our own 20-

year consent for T2 water, instead of us having to lease T1 water from neighbours, would be a huge benefit. With leasing there is always an uncertainty of when it may be taken back.

- 4.2 A secure 20-year supply of T2 water would give us the confidence to look at new irrigation technology (such as variable rate pivots) to help optimise the application of water applied for different crops, soil and climatic conditions. Over time we would also be looking to grow more specialised and higher value crops, e.g., carrots and broccoli and other vegetable crops, including some vegetable seed production and horticulture is also a possibility. A likely reduction in cattle numbers would also result.
- 4.3 This shift in production would require more staff and/or third party contractors on Papawai, which as with all businesses, has a positive flow-on effect for the wider community. Our OngaOnga school roll is sitting at ~60 children, which has decreased since our children attended the school, when it was sitting at ~130. Our local village also used to be a lot busier but at least still retains a general store, garage, an active church and a fire station. We are so lucky to have these amenities, as we have seen in other communities and around NZ, villages like this have become ghost towns. We need T2 water to help maintain and grow our community amenities.
- 4.4 Over the past 30 years living in CHB we have also seen a progressive reduction in our local farming and servicing industries. With that decline, we are then losing the young people, as the apprenticeships and jobs are not available in any great numbers. Again, we need T2 to help maintain these businesses and attract new workers and their families to the area.
- 4.5 When I think of the potential impact of T2 use on local farms beyond Papawai, I'm conscious that T2 is expensive water - this consent application has taken 7-years of effort and cost to date and up to ~35% of the water is to be pumped into the waterways each year for the next 20 years.
- 4.6 Farmers will therefore make very careful use of this resource. When coupled with the environmental mitigation and cultural participation, I

believe T2 is a significant step forward for the responsible use of water for agricultural purposes in Central Hawke's Bay.

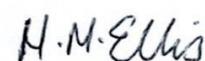
4.7 Finally, in this post-pandemic world with trade disruptions and rising tensions in Europe, food security within our own nation is vital.

5. WATER FOR MANAWHENUA

5.1 After submissions on the T2 applications were received, it became very clear to the T2 applicants that we needed to acknowledge and respond to concerns expressed by manawhenua.

5.2 At that time, as a group, we committed to seeing how we might make available a portion of the T2 water to manawhenua for their own use in the hope and expectation that they could participate in the productive use of that water, should they wish, for the social and economic development of their people. The refinement of the volumes sought by the applicants has helped us to define the quantum of water that could be made available and Robert Cottrell and others from Te Awahohonu Forest Trust have engaged with manawhenua, on behalf of us all, to gauge interest in the proposal.

5.3 We remain committed to the offer should manawhenua and commissioners consider it appropriate.



Helen Ellis

31 October 2022