

**BEFORE THE COMMISSION  
APPOINTED BY THE OTAGO REGIONAL COUNCIL**

**UNDER** the Resource Management  
Act 1991 (RMA)

**IN THE MATTER** Of an application by Dunedin  
City Council for resource  
consent being processed with  
reference RM20.280

**BY** **Brighton Surf Life Saving  
Club**  
**Submitter**

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**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF KAREN HANNA**

**DATED 5 MAY 2022**

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## STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF KAREN HANNA

### Introduction

1. My name is Karen Hanna. I am currently the Secretary on the Executive Committee and am authorised to provide this evidence on behalf of the Brighton Surf Lifesaving Club (**Brighton SLSC**). The Brighton SLSC was established in 1937 and provides beach patrols, beach education, beach and coastal safety, surf lifesaving training and surf club activities at Brighton Beach.
2. The Brighton Surf Club filed a submission in relation to the Smooth Hill Landfill Application.

### Scope and Structure of Evidence

3. My evidence will address:
  - (a) Brighton SLSC's functions as a member of Surf Life Saving New Zealand (**SLSNZ**)
  - (b) Recreation and education Brighton Beach
  - (c) Brighton SLSC's activities in the Coastal Environment at and in the connected Ōtokia Creek, and
  - (d) the significance of these activities to the community.

### Surf Life Saving New Zealand

4. Brighton SLSC is a member of Surf Life Saving New Zealand (**SLSNZ**), a charity which is also the leading beach and coastal safety, drowning prevention and rescue authority in Aotearoa. SLSNZ delivers:
  - (a) lifeguarding and essential emergency rescue services,
  - (b) a range of public education beach safety programmes,
  - (c) member education, training, and development, as well as
  - (d) a highly respected sport.

5. SLSNZ does all this as a charity and relies on the generosity of the public, commercial partners, foundations and trusts for donations and financial contributions and volunteer support. Brighton SLSC is one of the 74 surf lifesaving clubs SLSNZ represents. The 4,500 volunteer Surf Lifeguards, nationally play a pivotal role each summer and provide emergency call-out rescue services throughout Aotearoa, saving hundreds of lives each year and ensuring thousands return home safe after a day at the beach.
6. Despite this mahi, New Zealand's beach and coastal fatal drowning rates have increased over the last 5 years compared to the previous 5 years. We are committed to changing this. Our vision is "no-one drowns on our beaches". It's what drives us and why we are "In It for Life".
7. Brighton SLSC as all clubs, relies heavily on volunteers. Brighton currently has sixty (60) active volunteer Lifeguards. The Surf Club relies heavily on fundraising, the main local event is the annual Brighton Gala Day. There are other fundraising events such as National Jandal Day and other local fundraising opportunities.
8. We are lucky to have a hugely engaged and supportive community at Brighton that enable us to do what we do.

### **Brighton Beach and Ōtokia Creek**

9. Brighton Beach is a small, busy beach on the popular southern scenic route. The beach itself is sheltered amongst rocks and regarded as a relatively safe beach in comparison to other Dunedin beaches that are more exposed to weather conditions.
10. The Ōtokia Creek runs through the beach. Ōtokia Creek predominately runs through the south end of the beach but with constant changes in surf and sand movement, the tides can change the flow of the Creek to the middle or the north end of the beach. Attached and marked "A" is an aerial photograph of Brighton Beach, courtesy of the ODT.
11. Brighton is a great family beach and hot days see it attracts many hundreds of families, swimmers, surfers, and sunbathers. Attached and

marked “**B**” is a photograph of Brighton Beach on a busy summer’s day, courtesy of ODT.

12. The Ōtokia Creek has historically been known as ‘Poo Creek’ by locals, an ode to the contamination caused by septic tanks. However, this has changed as wastewater infrastructure has addressed those long-standing issues and the local community has taken responsibility for the health and wellbeing of this Creek. Most notably through the formation of the Ōtokia Creek and Marsh Trust and their extensive work to improve the quality of the Creek and Marsh ecosystem.
13. The benefits of this work have been quickly noticeable. Levels of contamination within the creek have reduced over time and we are seeing more and more people willing to use the creek. It provides a great spot for young children to play because the water is often a bit warmer than the sea itself. You will often see children and families pottering around, paddling Kayaks, investigating critters in and around the creek.
14. The Otago Regional Council notify the Brighton SLSNZ when levels of bacteria are elevated in the Ōtokia Creek and when on patrol, Lifeguards advise the swimmers and families to exercise caution and not use the Creek. This information is also posted on the Brighton Surf Club Facebook page to notify the community.

### **Visitors to Brighton Beach**

15. In my role I have the opportunity to observe the variety of visitors who come to Brighton Beach, but my property also looks down on Brighton Beach.
16. Families with young children (who are not necessarily local), go straight to the Ōtokia Creek as the water appears calm and shallow and they consider this area to be safer for their younger children, away from the waves. Families also choose the beach as a location for professional photographs because of its visual appeal.

17. The rocks around Brighton are accessed by visitors for foraging, gathering mussels, and fishing off the rocks. The beach is used as a boat ramp for small fishing boats all year round when conditions are suitable.
18. Brighton Beach is frequented by freedom campers who often park on the Brighton Domain, or in the reserve by the Surf Club.
19. Tertiary students visit regularly, and the Beach is used as a venue during 'O week' (Orientation).
20. The Local Schools use it as an outdoor classroom.

### **Wildlife**

21. The local penguin and Oyster Catcher population is protected and carefully monitored by the local community.
22. No dogs are allowed on the beach to assist protecting the wildlife, and the surf club community and lifeguards assist in monitoring this bylaw.
23. We see a wide variety of wildlife on the beach including sea lions, leopard seals, penguins and oyster catchers that are actively monitored. Attached and marked "C" and "C1" are some of the Brighton Beach wildlife.

### **Recreation, and Education**

24. Brighton Beach is an important venue for sports events such as Beach Volleyball and Multisport. Brighton Beach and Club was recently used as the final destination for the GODZone Adventure Race.
25. Brighton is a popular beach for surfers of all levels.
26. The Brighton Surf Club plays an important role in Beach Education for many schools in the Otago region and Brighton Lifeguards assist in running this programme each summer.
27. The Junior and Senior Surf members also train regularly on the beach, for knee board, ski, canoe, and Inflatable Rescue Boat (IRB). Training continues for our senior members throughout the winter.

28. The Ōtokia Creek provides a great environment for our younger members to try new equipment and build confidence before going into more open water. Attached and marked “D”, “D1”, “D2” and “D3” are photographs of junior and senior club members using Ōtokia Creek.

### **Search and Rescue**

29. Many of the senior members are involved in Search and Rescue (SAR) and the club is an important base for SAR callouts.
30. Brighton Beach is patrolled in summer by Brighton SLSC volunteer lifeguards at the weekends, and in the holiday season, Regional Lifeguards are employed to patrol the beach Monday to Friday.

### **Junior Surf Training and the Ōtokia Creek**

31. Over the last five years, the Brighton SLSC has become more popular for Junior Surf members. Over 100 families have joined the Brighton Surf Club as members, more than ever before. This increase in numbers means more members accessing Ōtokia Creek. The 2021/2022 season saw up 140 junior members attending Junior Surf, the highest number the club has had which is an indication of the increasing popularity of Brighton SLSC and Brighton Beach. Attached and marked “E” are photographs of busy junior surf days.
32. The Ōtokia Creek is used as a training area for our young and new club members to learn how to knee board, ski, and canoe, and also gain water confidence.
33. The water in the Creek is shallow and calm which provides optimal conditions to enable young junior surf members, (and more mature members new to surf) to learn basic skills to knee board, as well as other surf activities. Knee boarding is an essential skill for Lifeguards to use a rescue board.
34. The Marina in Dunedin Harbour is the next nearest area providing similar conditions to Ōtokia Creek for Junior surf training. However, the Marina is used by several other clubs, including the yacht club. Taking large numbers of junior surf members and the necessary gear to the

Marina several times a week is not a realistic alternative to using Ōtokia Creek.

35. Junior Surf Club sessions are held each Sunday morning, with additional training sessions often four evenings a week
36. The Brighton Club hosts at least one junior interclub event (competition/training event) each summer, which involves all Otago and Southland Surf Clubs coming to Brighton. Attached and marked “F” are various photographs of surf sport and Brighton athletes.
37. During the patrol season, the lifeguards provide a roving patrol to monitor and check on those using Ōtokia Creek. Attached and marked “G” and “H” are photographs of current and future Lifeguards

#### **Brighton Beach Club House**

38. Brighton SLSC replaced the old A frame club building with the new purpose-built Brighton Club building in 2013/2014.
39. The new building was the product of years of hard work, dedication and fundraising by club members and the wider community, combined with loans. The Brighton SLSC community has worked hard to pay off those loans which was finally achieved in 2021. The building has enhanced how the Brighton SLSC is able to operate and to connect with the community.
40. The club rooms are regularly used by community organisations such as a weekly playgroup, yoga, neighbourhood watch, and used as a venue for the Southern Community Response Team. It was also the base for the community ‘writeathon’ to help the Brighton and Dunedin community participate in the public submission process for this application.
41. Brighton SLSC’s Beach Education programmes use the new building which allows us to provide learning outside the classroom in most weather conditions.

42. The Brighton Surf Club is regularly used as a wedding venue and other functions such as corporate meeting venue, birthday parties and other special events which provides an additional source of funds to the club.
43. We see ourselves as an important part of the fabric of the Brighton Community.

#### **Effects of the Proposal on the Brighton SLSC**

44. The effects of the application on Brighton SLSC fall broadly into two categories. There are those effects of actual contamination of the coastal environment and Ōtokia Creek. These are outlined below and are potentially catastrophic for the ongoing viability of the club.
45. The second is the ongoing effect of contamination risk hanging over the activities undertaken by Brighton SLSC. This is a more nuanced effect, but it will begin immediately on the grant of consent.
46. Contamination of either the Coastal Environment and/or Ōtokia Creek will seriously affect the club and will curtail the club's ability to use the Beach and to protect the safety of the Beach's visitors. In particular:
  - (a) There will not be a suitable area to train new and junior club members to use the rescue boats, knee boards, skis, and canoes (the creek is used to train new members).
  - (b) The changing tides will not limit contamination to one part of the beach, it will impact on the whole of Brighton Beach and surrounding areas.
  - (c) The Brighton Club is a new building. It will not be possible to relocate the building. The fundraising and effort would be wasted if the beach could no longer be used.
  - (d) The Brighton Club relies on members and the annual fees they pay to keep the Club going. If members can't use the beach as and when they wish they are unlikely to see value in being a member of our club.



47. Contamination scares also have the potential to affect public behaviour. If the public feels that Brighton Beach is unsafe from contamination, they will migrate to other beaches that are not regularly patrolled, and often more dangerous, i.e., Ocean View and Back beach.
48. Shifting public use away from Brighton Beach to these beaches carries a real risk of increased drownings. Even if Brighton SLSC was to begin patrolling these areas, they present an inherently riskier environment for people.
49. People may also choose to become members of other SLSC such as St Clair, St Kilda or Warrington which may mean it is not possible for us to maintain a viable club. In my view this would be extremely detrimental to the social fabric of Brighton.
50. Brighton Beach has been a gem in Dunedin's crown for many many years and it is the heart of the Brighton community. It is why many people choose to live out here and why many visitors make the trip. It would be a monumental disappointment if this locality were to become 'off limits' because something unexpected, or stupid were to happen at Smooth Hill.
51. It would also be a huge loss to the community if the value of the beach were to be undermined due to anxiety about contamination. We have seen how that works, the way the community had a certain disdain for 'Poo Creek'. It has taken time and concerted effort to turn that around. I don't know why we would want to back down that road again.



Karen Hanna

Secretary

Brighton Surf Lifesaving Club

5 May 2022

# A

Aerial photograph, courtesy of ODT



# B

Brighton Beach in Summer, photograph courtesy of ODT



# B1

Brighton Beach from the Club House



C



# C1



# D

Junior training in Ōtokia Creek



# D1

Junior training in Ōtokia Creek





# D2



# D3



# E

Busy Junior Surf training



# E1

Busy junior surf training



# F

Various Photographs of Surf Sports and Brighton Athletes



# F1

Various Photographs of Surf Sports and Brighton Athletes



# F2



# G

## Seniors Training at Brighton





# H

## Our future lifeguards in training



