

**BEFORE THE COMMISSIONERS APPOINTED ON BEHALF  
OF THE OTAGO REGIONAL COUNCIL**

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

**IN THE MATTER** of an original submission on the  
Proposed Regional Policy  
Statement for Otago 2021  
(**PRPS**)

**BETWEEN** **OTAGO WATER RESOURCE  
USER GROUP**

**Submitter OS00235 and  
FS00235**

**FEDERATED FARMERS NZ  
INC**

**Submitter OS00239 and  
FS00239**

**DAIRY NZ**

**Submitter FS00601**

**LAUDER CREEK FARMING**

**Submitter OS00406**

**AND** **OTAGO REGIONAL COUNCIL**

**Local Authority**

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**EVIDENCE IN CHIEF OF KELLY ANN HECKLER**

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## **EVIDENCE IN CHIEF OF KELLY ANN HECKLER**

1. My name is Kelly Ann Heckler.
2. I am a Certified Nutrient Management Adviser, Green House Gas Adviser, Integrated Farming Consultant, Sheep and Beef farmer of a family-owned business, wife, mother, and community contributor.
3. My evidence relates to our family sheep and beef farm located in the Manuherikia Valley in Central Otago.
4. In our farming business, in more recent times, we have adopted an integrated farming approach. This has changed how we consider everyday decisions. We are still working our way through the process as we have only started in the past year. We are using the Whāma - Integrated Farming Framework to help us achieve our goals and outcomes now and into the future.
5. We believe that for our farming businesses to remain viable long term we need to balance our obligations to social, environmental, and economic sustainability (the 3 sustainability pillars or posts) in our everyday decision making. There are many farmers that are currently doing this in some way, shape, or form.
6. Integrated Farming allows us an intricate understanding of our farm as a whole system. By use of data, knowledge and experience we can align our understanding with our outcomes. Over time we monitor, assess, and reflect if we are achieving our outcomes.

### **Ensuring our animals have the resources they need**

7. An example is that one of our goals, in brief terms, is to ensure our animals have the resources they need to thrive. This comes from our value of being proud of our livestock and the produce that comes off our farm to feed our communities and the world.
8. Our outcomes relate to a wintering strategy that ensures stock production, minimises cost and potential impacts on the environment.

9. From here we have recognised the need for some changes to our wintering strategy. We have previously relied on brassicas as part of our wintering system but wanted to move away as some of the management options didn't suit our farm. After investigating many options, we identified that we didn't need to sow brassicas and run an all-grass wintering system.
10. Our farming system considered the impacts of the options under the 3 sustainability posts, below, (based on data, knowledge, and experience). If we didn't take a balanced approach and considered the decision under the 3 posts, we wouldn't be ensuring the longer-term viability of our farming business. For example, there is no sense in running an all-grass wintering system if the impact on the welfare of our stock is so adverse that they no longer remain productive.

#### **Questions we asked at our farm**

11. We asked and answered some of the following example questions when we completed our investigations:
  - (a) Environmental
    - (i) What will the impact of an all-grass wintering system be on our farm and catchment environment in terms of contaminant and nutrient loss?
    - (ii) What will the greenhouse gas profile look like under an all-grass wintering system?
    - (iii) What will be the impact on chemical use?
  - (b) Economic
    - (i) Is this a financially viable option?
    - (ii) What will happen to animal production? Immediately and indirectly.
    - (iii) What impact will there be on the rest of the farm system?
  - (c) Social

- (i) How will this decision impact on us and our staff workload?
  - (ii) What training will be needed to implement this decision?
  - (iii) Understanding and applying the current and ever-changing rules and regulations.
12. In farming systems there are many options to consider in wintering strategies (and all farm management) such as crops, and systems which can work for any farm. We chose the best system for our farm which became clear through consideration and analysis and linking this to our values. As farm systems are so unique, what looks to be a good option for one farm may not be for another. Considering the options under the three posts and gathering the data will ensure each farm is able to make an informed decision.
13. The change in wintering strategy, away from sowing brassicas and replacing it with an all-grass wintering system, has not been an overnight decision. We have always sown a mixed pasture sward, which the previous generation began, though we didn't apply this to wintering. Developing a wintering strategy more suited to our farm business, started 2 years ago though we have only just consolidated our pasture mixes and finally feel we might be able to grow enough feed to get through winter without impacting on some other area of the business. We still need to finalise the data from this process, which will not happen until Autumn 2024, but the interim data is suggesting we are on the right path.
14. We felt the brassica wintering system for our farm was quite input heavy. The brassicas were not overly successful in yield as they were often attacked by pests. To combat this, we were having to spray insecticide multiple times which was an additional financial cost as well as adding to our farm emissions. After analysing our wintering systems under all the sustainability posts we could see that long term brassicas and constant spraying wasn't going to work. We knew, from our research, that under a grass-based system it would be lower inputs. We know that every time a vehicle (e.g. a tractor to work

ground, or a 'bulkie' to sow fertiliser, or a spray truck) is going around the paddock, our inputs are increased and we value growing the most amount of feed for the lowest inputs to remain sustainable long term.

15. Our wintering system is mainly for our sheep, more specifically hoggets throughout the winter months and ewes after shearing. Therefore, we find an all-grass system works better for us the following reasons: we are not changing the diets of the sheep too much, the paddock regrows once it is grazed unlike many brassicas systems and the all-grass system is more extensive than grazing brassicas. We are also lucky our climate lends itself better to all grass wintering as we don't seem to get as much mud. It's not all benefits though as there are some management considerations, for example a larger area needs to be out in Autumn for the saved-up grass over winter that we wouldn't have had under the brassica system.
16. We have undertaken research and investigation in the hope that the decisions we make on farm can align with our values. We are constantly reflecting and learning as everything changes which may change the decisions we make. As long as they are considered with our values and the three areas of sustainability, we feel we have confidence that the decisions will be right for us at the time.

### **Conclusion**

17. Currently the proposed Regional Policy Statement does not give us any certainty about the long-term sustainability of our farming business. When we read through it and think about how this applies to our business and our communities, we are left feeling confused, unsure, and let down. We have started on a path down the integrated farming journey and feel that this document could actually hold us back from achieving long term sustainability in our farming business, due to the lack of certainty provided.
18. Our decision regarding winter grazing strategy took us a large amount of time to work through. The proposed RPS seems to have no appetite for time frames to implement changes with respect to long term sustainability. Our experience has taught us that if this is not

considered then it could be the downfall of achieving the intended outcomes.

Date: 23 November 2022

K A Heckler

Lauder Creek Farming