

Speaking Notes

Evelyn Cook for Ngāi Tahu ki Murihiku

Otago Regional Policy Statement

23 January 2023

Paragraphs	Notes
[1] to [4]	Mihi
[5] to [7], [16]	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● It was always my intention when preparing my evidence that I would address you in person on the matters written down, which is the right way to do this, so I ask that you consider both what you have written in front of you and what you hear from me today – all together this is my evidence as an expert cultural witness, and I can supply you with my speaking notes if you wish● I am the only cultural witness here today that is mandated to speak on behalf of Ngāi Tahu ki Murihiku – the three Papatipu Rūnanga with marae along the southern coast, Waihōpai , Awarua and Ōraka-Aparima● I am also the only wāhine amongst those giving expert cultural evidence● I therefore carry the primary responsibility of bringing these two perspectives forward for the panel● You will see that I have highlighted in my written evidence the impact on Kāi Tahu women of the loss of land and degradation of te taiao, and the kinds of decisions our wāhine faced – Kāi Tahu wāhine are strong advocates for te taiao amongst our whānau and within Ngāi Tahu ki Murihiku carry much of this kaupapa
[8] to [9]	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● I may talk about Kāi Tahu ki Otago and Ngāi Tahu ki Murihiku when I'm speaking, but it is important that the panel understand that, from our perspective, regional council boundaries are arbitrary with no connection to whakapapa. We are all interconnected Kāi Tahu whānau, connected to Otago● For example, I represent Waihopai Rūnaka on the Te Ao Mārama Board, based in Invercargill, but also whakapapa to Kāti Huirapa ki Puketeraki● We share interests in Mata-au and Catlins with Kāi Tahu ki Otago because of the way our tūpuna lived, settled and moved through the interconnected landscapes of what is now divided into the Otago and Southland regions● Mata-au lands and waters make up the majority of inland Otago (Tuawhenua) where all seven Papatipu Rūnaka have an interest and where there is no marae - our marae are all coastal to the north and south of Mata-au● Mata-au looms large in much of the kaupapa we are involved in, ki uta ki tai, from the inland lakes out to the coastal waters

[10], [21], [24]

- The significance of this new RPS to us should not be underestimated because it is the first RPS in Otago to appropriately recognise Ngāi Tahu ki Murihiku as mana whenua in Otago
- We set up Te Ao Mārama to work on behalf of Rūnaka to achieve the aspirations of our people, and since Settlement we have been steadily building up resources for us to be able to achieve outcomes, which we can now better support in Mata-au and Catlins
- It's an important milestone for Ngāi Tahu ki Murihiku that Te Ao Mārama has been able to help draft the RPS with ORC and Aukaha, and that we are addressing you at this hearing
- We have been able to champion our approach to cultural landscapes through this process, which employs the mātauraka of our people rather than fitting in to non-indigenous frameworks - this is very important to us - we have invested over time in developing our own methodologies and we need to know they are recognised within the planning framework

[11], [12], [23]

- I've emphasised Article Three of Te Tiriti in my evidence because its often overlooked that this part of the Treaty places mana whenua firmly in the community - our whānau are living in communities all over the region
- I have also highlighted that our people consider Te Tiriti to be a benefit to all, not just a document for Māori
- However, it is because of the breaches of Te Tiriti that there is an imbalance we as Kāi Tahu are continually working to correct, including through restoration of te taiao and improving whānau well-being

[17] to [22]

- Te Tangi a Tauira, our iwi management plan, captures the wisdom of our tūpuna who understood the importance of protecting the mauri of the natural environment we depend upon, and was one of the first iwi management plans in the country to address climate change kaupapa
- Our whānau are deeply concerned about restoring balance in our relationship with te taiao because we are so far in deficit – we absolutely must put the natural world first now, for the sake of our mokopuna and those that follow, to leave our environment in a better condition than it is in now – mō tātou, ā, mō kā uri ā muri ake nei – otherwise we fear what they will have to face
- We have a good opportunity through this RPS to purposefully respond to the threat of climate change, to address the impact of salmonids on indigenous fisheries, the impact of dams throughout Mata-au whether they are hydroelectric dams or irrigation dams that impact on the health of the whole river system, as well as protecting and restoring populations of taoka and mahika kai species, and ensuring vigorous species such as wilding pines and willows do not take over our whenua

[13] to [15]

- We are very fortunate that the Catlins area, both in Otago and Southland, provides our whānau with a safe place to continue cultural practices that have been handed down through the generations, so we must look after this area with great care for future generations

- That includes protecting against the advance of exotic carbon forestry which we know is a primary concern for whānau there – we have been in hui with Catlins whānau over the last year discussing this issue – whole farms and stations have been purchased by multinational companies and converted entirely to carbon forestry, for example at Tahakopa, with little prospect of active management of those forested lands
- We have been able to protect our customary fisheries through establishing Puna-wai-Toriki, our coastal mātaimai, which we put in place in 2008 through the use of our Fisheries Settlement mechanisms, but we also need the regional planning framework to help protect the condition of our mātaimai waters and coastline
- Unless we address the risks of coastal erosion and sea level rise, especially in relation to the closed landfill at Kaka Point, and prioritise actions to prevent degradation of the area, we will lose what is so precious in this wāhi taoka
- There are significant areas of Māori land through the Catlins, like Maranuku that I mention and is in the Cain whānau evidence and including some SILNA lands that many Kāi Tahu have a relationship with, much of which is undeveloped and contributes to the health of this part of Otago – if the panel are interested they can see these areas online in Kā Huru Manu which shows all the original area of the various types of land grants, not all of which are still in Kāi Tahu hands – www.kahurumanu.co.nz
- We support the aspirations of the owners of these lands, it is for them to make their decisions about what they want for their whānau, that is their mana and we want to see them able to express ahi kā where they are as they wish to - it was the original intent of the land grants that they would be able to do this so we need the RPS to reflect and honour this, to overcome the historic barriers they have faced in working with their lands

Closing

- We are putting our faith in the panel to recognise the significance of these matters and support the aspirations of our whānau, to protect and restore what we value, and to create new opportunities for our whānau to thrive in their identity as Kāi Tahu
- That was the theme of our waiata E Tāua Mā, which my late partner Kelly Davis Te Maire had a hand in writing - it was his passion to see the sorrows of the past transformed in the lives of our rakatahi, connecting them with their whenua, traditional mahika kai practices and understanding of themselves
- This is why we do what we do, as tangata tiaki