

## **STATEMENT & NOTES: Hearing**

Esther Water from Wānaka.

Thank you for the opportunity to be here.

In terms of my background, I have:

- *Bachelor of Resource Studies (majoring in Human Ecology and Development)*
- *Master of Applied Science (with Distinction). Research focused on how cultural values shape development.*
- *Currently studying for a Master of English (Creative Writing), exploring the relationships between humans and rivers, the 'rights' framing of rivers, and the impact of Te Mana o te Wai in Aotearoa/New Zealand.*

Personal level - I have spent the last 30 years on rivers both in New Zealand and overseas. Nine of those years were in a professional capacity as a whitewater guide. I've been a whitewater kayaker for more than 30 years.

### **Statement**

I am deeply disquieted by the suggestion in the applicants AEE that the proposed activity somehow benefits our community through its associative links to historic goldmining.

I'm concerned about the high number of negative (or adverse) effects the proposed activity would have, and the very low number of positive effects.

As Tony has clearly elaborated on, there are high risks to river users with the proposed activity. In itself, this poses a threat to socio-cultural wellbeing, in that it prevents or limits people from recreating on the river, which is an activity from which many people derive wellbeing - through spending time with others, in a nourishing environment, and working towards a shared goal. Consequently, I argue that on this one factor alone, the proposed activity has significant negative effects with regard to sociocultural wellbeing.

There is also, still, a distinct lack of information and evidence provided on specific matters which relate to recreational and amenity values. For example, Darryl Sycamore yesterday stated that there are "not many people attending scientific reserves," with no evidence to back this statement. In discussing the Mata-au Scientific Reserve, Jessica McKenzie states that "the viewing audience from the reserve is likely to be limited," with no evidence to back her claim. I'd like to note that the vibrant local Forest and Bird chapter in Wanaka, makes trips to scientific reserves. My concern here, is the continued lack of specific evidence to back assertions by the applicant's team.

In thinking more closely about the environment, or the living world, the applicant's legal team (28) state that "this application must be assessed against the environment as it is, not as we might wish it to be" (p.11).

I emphatically disagree. Te Mana o te Wai, our National Freshwater Policy Statement *requires* us to understand how we can actively improve and support the health and vitality of the river. As Tim Vial has pointed out in his submission, when he refers to the Environment Court's interpretation of Te Mana o te Wai, is that this national policy is for *all* New Zealanders. Te Mana o te Wai is a substantive expression of our collective cultural values. In line with Tim Vial's written and oral evidence, and as noted in my Master's proposal and research, it is a paradigm shift. Some have shifted, some not.

It is now our collective responsibility to clearly understand, and apply, Te Mana o te Wai. I interpret this as keeping the wellbeing of the river, central and foremost in any decision making, and demonstrating care and respect with *all* our actions.

I urge and encourage the Commissioners to give full weight to Te Mana o te Wai. To put the health of the river, first.

