

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

Under	The Resource Management Act 1991 (the Act)
In the Matter	of an application to alter and extend existing structures and to occupy the common marine and coastal area (RM22.550)
Between	ONUMAI ENTERPRISES LIMITED Applicant
And	OTAGO REGIONAL COUNCIL Respondent
AND	SALLY BARKMAN Submitter

BRIEF OF EVIDENCE OF SALLY BARKMAN

DATED 26 AUGUST 2025



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BRIEF OF EVIDENCE OF SALLY BARKMAN

Introduction

1. My full name is Sally Barkman. Originally from Dunedin, I now reside in Auckland and for the past 7 years, I have been employed by Spinal Support, a registered charity as a peer supporter. I am now Vice-President of Spinal Support New Zealand.
2. 9 years. 7 months. 10 days. That's when my life changed in one moment from an able-bodied triathlete, mother, wife, intrepid traveller to permanently living life in a wheelchair. I will never walk again. I have had 8 surgeries, 4 spinal, 1 pending and there will be more. My Spinal cord was crushed permanently. I have zero mobility from mid chest down. My arms are my only physical powerhouse. Every day I am grateful, I have a positive outlook, but every day is also extremely challenging. I had no idea of the impact a disability has through the lens of an able-bodied person. This change has had major impact not only on myself, but my husband, son, whanau and friends.
3. I remain very fit, covering 25km each morning in my hand cycle wheelchair despite challenging crossings, uneven paths, and crowded routes that pose increased risks compared to able-bodied movement. I also swim twice a week; while I need assistance with entry, exit, dressing, and personal care, I swim several kilometres per session, adapting as needed.
4. It took years to adjust. Being in a wheelchair can be challenging, especially when dealing with the reactions of others. People often stare, and some may ask rude or personal questions. It's important to remember that their curiosity often stems from a lack of understanding. Developing a thick skin and maintaining a positive attitude can help. Responding with grace and educating others about my situation can turn awkward moments into opportunities for awareness. Surrounding

myself with supportive friends and family who understand my experiences can also provide comfort and strength.

5. My role as Peer Supporter at Spinal Support NZ is a fulfilling role. When someone experiences an SCI (Spinal Cord Injury), I am often the first person they will meet. I work with the newly injured person and their families, helping them adjust to their new normal, showing ways of how to do things, supporting the family & friends, a shoulder to lean on and someone who can help with finding answers to their many questions. I also work closely with the Physios and Occupational Therapists, problem solving with the newly injured and finding ways to help achieve their goals in their new normal life.

6. I am involved in many different aspects of living life with a disability other than my job. I'm heavily involved with Disability Sport Auckland, volunteering and supporting events for children with disabilities. I have received the Volunteer of the year award from Disability Sport Auckland and also Spirit of Disability Sport Auckland. I have volunteered for the last 5 years at the Halberg games, which is a 3-day event for young people with disabilities from all over New Zealand. I'm also involved in some research programs with Auckland University and Catwalk Trust. I provide consultancy services when required to many different organisations including Auckland Airport, ferry companies, theatres etc. I also support many people in the community, enabling them to advocate for themselves

Benefits of the proposal for accessing the coast

7. I understand that the Onumai proposal includes an accommodation facility appropriate for disabled people, access to a wharf including for wheel chair accessibility and also a hoist which will allow safe entry into a boat.

8. To be able to board a boat safely without family or friends lifting me would be incredible. The freedom to get in a canoe safely and head out on the water would be fantastic. To be able to experience things like this, like able bodied people would be life changing.
9. Being in a wheelchair can present unique challenges, especially when it comes to accessing boats or enjoying time on the water. The frustration of encountering barriers, such as inaccessible docks, steep ramps, or lack of proper equipment, can be disheartening. It often feels like an additional layer of exclusion, preventing the enjoyment of activities that many take for granted. The desire to experience the freedom and tranquillity of being on or in the water is strong, but the physical limitations and lack of accommodations can make it seem out of reach.
10. Advocating for more accessibility and inclusive design is crucial to ensure that everyone, regardless of mobility, can share in the joy and serenity that water activities offer.
11. I grew up in Dunedin and have always enjoyed summers at Taieri Mouth. Over the past decade, returning there with family and friends remains a highlight. However, joining water activities like boating is challenging due to strict timing around high tide for safe lifting on and off boats, which creates risks for everyone involved. Access to a crane on the wharf would make such activities much more accessible for me and others, enabling us to participate more fully. Many take this accessibility for granted until it's no longer available. I believe an accessible wharf would greatly benefit people in Otago, helping prevent anyone from feeling left out of these experiences. There is a disability crane on the Auckland harbour which is widely used by the Disabled community, as far as I am aware there is nothing like this in the South Island.

Travel as a disabled person and what the proposal would mean

12. One common question I am always asked is "can I still travel". The answer is yes but it requires quite a bit of organisation and forward planning. Trying to find accessible accommodation is a nightmare.
13. I can very rarely book online and often have to spend ages on the phone making sure that potential accommodation meets my needs. Yes, I can stay in all the major hotel chains however my experience is that accessibility means different things to different people and is very varied from place to place. I would love to be able to book Airbnb, unique accommodation or such like and go back to experiencing more remote locations when I travel.
14. Further, where others may be readily able to spend a night in a boat on the coast, it is not always straightforward for those of us with disabilities. At a minimum it relies on others being there to support us. And overnight boat facilities are unlikely to be convenient in terms of toilet and cooking, stairs and access. In contrast, the proposal from the Onumai would allow me to stay over water without the risks and challenges associated with a boat. For some staying on a boat would simply not be an option.
15. The wharf would allow me the ability to experience a different type of holiday with access to the water and water activities. The Onumai proposal is notable for its inclusive approach. Greg and Angela have considered providing options that accommodate individuals with a variety of needs, including those who are unable to sleep on a boat.
16. The proposed accommodation is designed to suit people with different or similar disabilities. I travel frequently within NZ and abroad and finding suitable accommodation to suit my needs is challenging and often more expensive due to the specialised features and limited supply. This adds an additional layer of frustration and financial burden for those who already face numerous daily challenges.

17. 1 in 4 New Zealanders has a disability, but accommodation does not reflect this reality.
18. Based on available information, there are very few facilities in New Zealand that offer overwater accommodation. Offering such an option could provide individuals who cannot sleep on a boat with a comparable experience. In Taieri Mouth, this type of accommodation would have the added bonus of offering direct water access via the crane and increase accessibility of the water for people with disabilities, a win win.
19. This proposal for overwater accommodation in my opinion is architecturally attractive, improves on current options, and provides equal opportunity to stay in a stunning part of New Zealand.
20. Whilst I am still able to engage in active recreational opportunities with some adaptation, there are other people who are not so lucky. For them, the opportunity to simply get up close to and immersed in the environment of the wharf, above the water would still be significant in my view. Spaces such as this are often not accessible, and we can feel excluded from these special places. In those situations, our feelings of 'being different' can be really amplified. I can envisage how wonderful it would feel to wake up at this place and be able to sit at the windows looking out, or sit on the wharf for a morning coffee.
21. I also want to reinforce the comments made by Mr Marrable and Ms Grant regarding the utility of the facilities to enable recreation activities. The practical challenges that disabled people face with things like pressure sores are real, and do at times prevent us from wanting to engage in new activities because we are worried about the risks. These can present significance perceived barriers. Having such a facility available would allow those barriers to be overcome. I can see the opportunity afforded by this facility as offering a gateway for people to try something new, see how they can overcome those barriers and

go on to do more. The benefits of that for their mental and physical wellbeing would be significant. The opportunity for community events to be inclusive of those with access challenges would also be hugely valuable and once again contribute to disabled people feeling valued and included.

22. I ask the Commissioners to consider my perspective and seek your understanding. It would be so meaningful for those of us in the disabled community.

Dated 26 August 2025

Sally Barkman