

**Before Independent Hearing Commissioners appointed by
The Otago Regional Council**

In the Matter of

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

And

In the Matter of

an application under section 88 of
the Act to alter and extend existing
structures and to occupy the
common marine and coastal area
(RM22.550)

And

In the Matter of

a submission by Te Rūnanga o
Ōtākou on RM22.550

**Statement of Evidence of
Edward Weller Ellison
for Te Rūnanga o Ōtākou**

Dated: 2 September 2025

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KUPU WHAKATAKI

Tēnā koutou katoa, e aku nui me aku rahi, e rere ana kā mihi o te raki nei, a, kā mihi poroporoaki ki a rātou kua wehe atu ki tua te ārai, moe mai oki oki mai rā.

INTRODUCTION

Qualifications and Experience

1. My full name is Edward Weller Ellison. I was born in 1950 and raised at Ōtākou in our whānau home “Te Waipounamu” on our ancestral lands that abut and overlook Otago Harbour. I have held the role of Ūpoko of Te Rūnanga o Ōtākou (**Ōtākou**) since 2018.
2. I am the chairperson of the New Zealand Conservation Authority, Chair of the Māori Heritage Council and Deputy Chair of the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Board, and I represent Kāi Tahu ki Otago Rūnaka on the Otago Regional Council (**Council**) Strategy and Planning Committee and the Land and Water Regional Plan Governance Group. I am the recent past chair of Aukaha, a former Kaitakawaenga (Manager Iwi Liaison) at Council, and former Deputy Kaiwhakahaere for Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu. I was also an accredited RMA Hearings Commissioner for many years.
3. I have many years of experience in engaging with local authorities and Crown agencies on environmental management matters on behalf of Ōtākou and other Otago rūnaka.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

4. I give my evidence on behalf of Ōtākou as a cultural witness and cultural expert for the rūnaka. I am an authorised representative for Ōtākou on resource consent matters in our takiwā.
5. I have reviewed the consent application by Onumai Enterprises Limited to occupy the Coastal Marine Area (**CMA**) at Taiari Mouth for the purpose of recreational and visitor accommodation activities (**Application or Proposal**). My evidence addresses the following matters:
 - (a) Kāi Tahu and the Ngāi Tahu Claims Settlement Act 1998 (**Settlement Act**);

- (b) The whakapapa relationship underpinning the associations between Ōtākou hapū, and the Taiari;
 - (c) Ōtākou rakatirataka and kaitiakitaka;
 - (d) The history of Kāi Tahu occupation, cultural practices and use of the Taiari and Taiari river mouth;
 - (e) The mana whenua history of loss in the Taiari and its catchment; and
 - (f) The effects of the Proposal on cultural values and aspirations of mana whenua for Taiari and the Taiari Mouth.
6. Throughout my evidence I refer to the “Taiari,” as this is the correct spelling for the Taiari River. A glossary of te reo Māori terms is attached as **Annexure A**.

KĀI TAHU WHAKAPAPA

7. Kāi Tahu Whānui is the collective of individuals who descend from Waitaha, Kāti Māmoe and the five primary hapū of Kāi Tahu, namely Kāti Kurī, Ngāti Irakehu, Kāti Huirapa, Ngāi Tūāhuriri, and Ngāi Te Ruahikihiki. When we refer to ourselves as Kāi Tahu or Kāi Tahu Whānui we also refer inclusively to our Waitaha and Kāti Māmoe whakapapa.
8. Where I am from, Ōtākou, we have Waitaha, Kāti Māmoe, and Kāi Tahu whakapapa. Our hapū affiliations come out of Te Ruahikihiki whakapapa, with the principal hapū being Kāi Taoka and Moki II, while an Ōtākou-specific hapū, Kāi Te Pahi also has special significance within our takiwā.

RECOGNITION OF RAKATIRATAKA AND MANA WHENUA

9. Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu is the governing iwi authority established by the Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu Act 1996. The Crown in 1998 recognised Ngāi Tahu as “the tāngata whenua of, as holding rangatiratanga within, the takiwā of Ngāi Tahu Whānui.”¹ It has therefore been clearly affirmed in statute that Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu is the sole representative of Ngāi Tahu Whānui.
10. Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu is made up of 18 papatipu rūnaka. Papatipu rūnaka are a contemporary focus for whānau and hapū.
11. Te Rūnanga o Ōtākou is the papatipu rūnaka that represents hapū who uphold the mana of the whenua for the Taiari river and Taiari Mouth. The takiwā of Te Rūnanga

¹ Ngāi Tahu Claims Settlement Act 1998, section 6.

o Ōtākou centres on Ōtākou and extends from Purehurehu to Te Matau and inland, sharing an interest in the lakes and mountains to the western coast with Rūnanga to the North and to the South.

12. An associated whānau rūpū, the Moturata Taiari Whānau, is under the korowai of Ōtākou.
13. The Settlement Act included cultural redress mechanisms to recognise and give practical effect to Kāi Tahu mana over resources regarded as taoka and cultural landscapes. It also included other cultural redress, such as the reinstatement of Kāi Tahu placenames, Statutory Acknowledgements and other deeds of recognition, nohoaka and statutory representative roles on Conservation Boards and the NZ Conservation Authority.
14. In respect of the Statutory Acknowledgements, the initial Crown offer was for much less in number than appeared in the Deed of Settlement. As the number of Statutory Acknowledgements grew, we adopted a process of generally applying Statutory Acknowledgements to every second water body as you move north to south. That is not to say that the water bodies that were not subject to a Statutory Acknowledgement were of less importance. Rather, our intent was to establish a template for statutory recognition of the cultural values, uses and beliefs associated with Otago's water bodies through regional plans, and a pathway for Kāi Tahu to be notified of resource consents that affected those values. I note that Te Tai o Āraiteuru (Otago Coastal Marine Area) is conferred status as a Statutory Acknowledgement Area, inclusive of Taiari Mouth. Despite not having the status as a Statutory Acknowledgement Area, the Taiari River is of paramount importance to Ōtākou.
15. The Crown in settling the Ngāi Tahu Claim acknowledged that the settlement did not *"diminish or in any way affect the Treaty of Waitangi or any of its Articles or the ongoing relationship between the Crown and Ngāi Tahu ... or undermine any rights under the Treaty..."*. It is a fundamental principle of Te Tiriti o Waitangi to actively protect Māori interests. In the view of Kāi Tahu, this duty is not merely passive, but rather entails the taking of active steps, to the fullest extent practicable, to protect the features of the environment that are of significance to Māori.

ŌTĀKOU ASSOCIATION WITH THE TAIARI AND TE TAI O ĀRAITEURU

16. The rights of rakatirataka and the obligations of kaitiakitaka in relation to the natural environment arise from, and are fundamentally linked to, whakapapa. Due to this

connection, the state of health and wellbeing of wai māori, wai tai, and te taiao are seen as a reflection on the mana, health and wellbeing of mana whenua.

Wāhi tūpuna

17. Wāhi tūpuna are treasured ancestral landscapes and it is our duty as kaitiaki to care for them and pass them on to future generations in a state that retains the central characteristics of what made them special to our people. The emphasis should be placed on strongly protecting what remains.
18. Wāhi tūpuna are interconnected ancestral places, landscapes and taoka that reflect our histories and traditions and that also hold contemporary importance for mana whenua. Wāhi tūpuna are characterised not only by natural and physical aspects, but also by the place names and associated traditions and events that bind us to the landscape, just as the landscape itself is a part of us. Such landscapes link creation traditions with whakapapa, underpinning our mana whenua and mana moana status, and giving body to our mātauraka and tikaka. Such ancestral landscapes are treasured places that transcend the generations.
19. In our traditions, the taniwha Matamata is the kaitiaki (guardian) of Kāti Māmoe chief Te Rakitauneke who had a pā on the northern end of Maukaatua. Matamata is attributed to carving out the Ōtākou harbour.
20. The Taiari River meanders down through three plains now known as Maniototo (Māniatoto), Strath Taieri, and Taieri, with hills and ranges between. The zig-zag nature of its twists and turns is reputed to be the result of the taniwha Matamata wriggling around looking for Te Rakitauneke. The taniwha finally reposed where Saddle Hill is now and remains as the peaks Turi Makamaka and Puke Makamaka.
21. The name 'Taiari' refers to the way that the tidal changes in the ocean at the river mouth influence the flow of the river as far as the upper reaches. These influences can be seen particularly in Waihora (Lake Waihora) and Waipōuri (Lake Waipori), located at the southern end of the Taiari Plains, and connected to the river by the Waipōuri/Waihora wetlands complex. The twists and turns of the river and the tidal influences have been instrumental in creating a rich wetland environment which previously supported extensive mahika kai activity over the full length of the Taiari awa.
22. Among the histories handed down from our tūpuna is that of Kāti Māmoe rakatira Tūwiroa and his daughter Hākitekura. Motupara was a pā established by Tūwiroa on the south side of the Taiari river mouth. Tūwiroa's daughter, Hākitekura, was the Kāti Māmoe woman famed as the first to swim across Whakatipu wai māori

(Lake Whakatipu) and whose name is given to several significant places and peaks at Whakatipu wai māori.

23. Tūwiroa's relation, Tukiauau, had grave concerns that he was being pursued by Kāti Kurī, so Tūwiroa agreed to provide sanctuary for him and his people at Whakaraupuka. Tukiauau took shelter up the Taiari Gorge and in the lake system that occupied what is now the Taiari plains. Tukiauau's son, Korokiwhiti, fell in love with Hākitekura. The romance was in full bloom when Tukiauau received word that an avenging war party was heading to the Taiari, whereupon he made arrangements to depart immediately without time to inform his lover of such plans. When the flotilla of canoes passed below the pā at the mouth of the Taiari River, Hākitekura was distressed at being left behind. She raced to the edge of the cliff and dived into the river where, having misjudged the cliff, she fell to her death on the rocky banks below. This place is now known as Te Rereka o Hākitekura (The Leap of Hākitekura). Te Rereka o Hākitekura endures as a wāhi taoka in the landscape of Taiari as the first cliff upstream of the former Motupara pā. Also on this side of the Taiari awa was the cave at the first rocky headland, known as Te Ao Kakume after the wife of a Kāti Māmoe chief.
24. There is a desire from mana whenua for landscapes and places of significance within Otago to be recognised and the values of these landscapes protected. It is important to note that while the term 'cultural landscapes' has been used in the past, these areas are considered distinct from natural landscapes. While natural landscapes may be enriched by historical and cultural values, 'cultural landscapes' also encompass highly modified sites that are significant in terms of section 6(e) of the Resource Management Act 1991 (**the Act**).²

Wāhi ikoa

25. Place names (wāhi ikoa) play an important role in the fabric of our cultural and political identity as Kāi Tahu. The action of naming a place – for example a river or mountain – is associated with establishing mana over place, and is one of the traditional 'take' (claim or right) used to determine who has rakatirataka over a place or resource. Names persist over time and span generations, embedding knowledge and stories into the landscape; our history is in our place names. For Kāi Tahu, our place names are a permanent and enduring reference to history, people, and events.
26. A significant element in wāhi ikoa is reference to mahika kai. Works by H.K. Taiaroa in 1879-1880, and Herries Beattie in the 20th century, have provided a record of information, sourced from our kaumātua, about places and their names and the

² Resource Management Act 1991, s 6(e): the relationship of Maori and their culture and traditions with their ancestral lands, water, sites, waahi tapu, and other taonga.

mahika kai activities found there. The availability of mahika kai was a central reason for our ancestors to visit the whenua, rivers, lakes and wetlands of Otago, year after year for generations.

Kāika, nohoaka and ara tawhito

27. Other components of wāhi tūpuna include kāika, nohoaka and ara tawhito. Kaika and nohoaka were permanent and seasonal settlements that were often located close to rivers and lakes and to sources of mahika kai and other resources. Ara tawhito are traditional travel routes that were used by our tūpuna much as our roads and highways are used today. These pathways and trails connected the coast with the interior of Otago, often following waterways, river valleys and passes. Over time, as our tūpuna (ancestors) confirmed these trails through seasonal use, this enabled our people to maintain ahi-kā-roa (the warm hearths of occupation), and to maintain whakawhanaukataka (connections and relationships). Another significant reason for the continued use of ara tawhito over generations was the access this gave us to mahika kai resources in the interior of Te Waipounamu.
28. Trails from the coast into the interior followed the river valleys, such as the Taiari. The Taiari trail provided access to water-based mahika kai, and also to areas used for hunting birds and gathering plant material for rokoā and other uses. They also connected our communities and allowed for social, economic, and political connections to be made and maintained.
29. As stated in the Ōtākou submission, Ōtākou hapū made seasonal visits along the Taiari and whānau groups commonly travelled throughout the whole of late spring and summer, using the Taiari as the main highway from coast to interior. Following the Taiari inland from the kāika at Taiari Mouth, settlements included Tukiauau's temporary pā at Whakaraupuka (Ram Island) at Waihora (Lake Waihora); and the pā sites of Ōmoua and Te Amoka which arose from the Taiari battles. The primary reason for travelling inland was for seasonal mahika kai practices, particularly for gathering kanakana, eels, and weka. Taiari was and is the highway linking the food bowls of the rich Taiari plains wetland system – including Waihora and Waipōuri – which could be transported out to the coast. We have lost many of our mahika kai places as a result of drainage and modification of the plains. Closer to the coast there were low altitude and near sea level lakes and a series of wetlands behind the coastal dunes that were important mahika kai localities. On the Taiari Plains the wetlands Waipōuri and Waihora were once accompanied by lakes Tatawai, Potaka and Marama Te Taha (Loch Ascog). Semi-permanent villages were established on the basis of the contemporary food resources in wetland, forest and nearby sea coast.

30. From Taiari Mouth, another ara tawhito connected Taiari mouth to the Ōtākou harbour. This trail was described by Monro, who accompanied the New Zealand Company surveyor Tuckett when determining the boundaries of the proposed Ōtākou purchase:

“From the mouth of the Taiari river, we proceeded northward by the beach. Long ridges descend to the water's edge here, with steep intervening wooded gullies. The land seems fertile, but its surface is rather uneven. We left the beach at the mouth of a stream named the Kaikarai [sic], from which a walk of about six miles brought us to the head of Otago harbour.”³

31. Into the 1830s, Kāi Tahu settlements at Taiari were known for their cultivations of wheat and potatoes as whānau and hapū adapted and participated in the emerging settler economy. Taiaroa and Karetai, rakatira of Ōtākou, owned whaleboats with which they brought potatoes from the Taiari and Moeraki settlements to be sold to Europeans at Ōtākou, or exported by the Weller brothers to Sydney. At Taiari, establishment of the short-lived Weller Brothers' Moturata Island whaling station in 1839 was another key influence on Kāi Tahu occupation along the Taiari and at Taiari Mouth.
32. Mana whenua have an enduring kaitiakitaka responsibility to keep the connection with wāhi tūpuna areas warm so that stories, associations and traditions of wāhi tūpuna are remembered, celebrated and maintained for ever. The fundamental test to this duty is “Can we still recognise this place?” Loss of wāhi tūpuna means loss of cultural narratives and mātauraka, and of Kāi Tahu identity.
33. The inappropriate degrading of such wāhi tūpuna would represent a gross breach of our mana whenua values and associations, further reduce ancestral connections, and disinherit the generations that come after us.

Mahika kai

34. The gathering of mahika kai underpins the relationship of Kāi Tahu relationship with Otago's rivers, lakes and wetlands and the broader environment. Our cultural identity as whānau and as hapū is tied to our resources. I have described above the way in which the relationship of our tūpuna to the Taiari was bound up with mahika kai.
35. The whole of the Otago coastal area also offered a bounty of mahika kai, including a range of shellfish, sea fishing, eeling and harvest of other freshwater fish in lagoons, wetlands and rivers, waterfowl, sea bird egg gathering, forest birds, and a

³ Monro, D, in Nelson Examiner and New Zealand Chronicle, July – November 1844. *Notes of a journey through a part of the middle Island of NZ.*

variety of plant resources including harakeke, fern and tī kōuka root. The Kāi Tahu reliance on these coastal resources increased even further after the land sales of the 1840s and 1850s, and the associated loss of access to much traditional land-based mahika kai.

36. When the landscape is modified, there's loss. We have already lost 90% of our mahika kai. There is a sense of loss and a sense of powerlessness if you as kaitiaki cannot do anything about it, if you have no way of having a say when these things happen. You are also letting down the next generation for failing to do what you should do as a kaitiaki on these issues. It is a further loss. It reduces the connection.
37. Our coastal environment – the ocean, beaches, estuaries, river mouths and wetlands – and how we engage with it, is crucial to our identity, our sense of unique culture and our ongoing ability to keep our tikaka and mahika kai practices alive.

THE ŌTĀKOU PURCHASE AND THE TAIARI NATIVE RESERVE

38. In 1844, Kāi Tahu sold over 400,000 acres of land in the Otago region, known as the Ōtākou Block, to the New Zealand Company for £2,400. In contrast to many of the later purchase agreements, including the Canterbury Purchase (also known as “Kemps Purchase”) in 1848, the boundaries of Ōtākou Block were clearly delineated and agreed to, and land which was specifically reserved from the sale was identified in the purchase deed. The land retained by Kāi Tahu was around 9,615 acres and represented some (but not all) of those areas which we did not wish to relinquish.
39. When the Ōtākou Deed was decided, our tūpuna wanted to retain the entirety of the Otago peninsula (21,250 acres) given its immense importance to us, but after disagreement from the New Zealand Company, they eventually accepted land only at the northern end of the peninsula which is what we retained as the Ōtākou Reserve (spanning 6665 acres). We also retained the Taiari Reserve (spanning 2310 acres). There had been assurances by the New Zealand Company that reserves at Kōpūtai (Port Chalmers) and Princes Street would be set aside for accommodation and tauraka waka (boat landing); and an understanding that 10% of all land sold would be reserved for the benefit of Kāi Tahu, however, these agreements were not set out in the deed or map, nor were they honoured.
40. In 1846, the unsold lands at Taiari and Ōtākou were ‘reserved’ for Kāi Tahu in the form of the Ōtākou Block Crown Grant, dated 13 April 1846. Work on “New Edinburgh” also started in 1846, and the peninsula was divided into farms of around 50 acres for soon-to-arrive settlers which were gradually occupied and worked to supply a growing Dunedin with food. In 1862, a return of the Native Reserves was

provided to the House of Representatives, including the Onumia section of the Taiari reserved lands.⁴

41. Our people on our Native Reserves were quickly ignored by the provincial governments and the Crown following the land sales. With increasing European settlement, the three decades from 1850 to 1880 saw the loss of the major inland mahika kai resources, and disruption of the ability of our tūpuna to access mahika kai resources whether on land or water. Whānau living at the Taiari Reserve became increasingly reliant on coastal food resources such as fish, tūaki and seabirds, while many continued to participate in the annual heke to the Tītī islands.
42. In 1868, the Native Land Court partitioned the Taiari Native Reserve into Blocks A, B, and C, and allocated ownership into individual holdings rather than communal ownership. As the Taiari Plains were developed and lands privatised, Kāi Tahu whānau were confined more and more to these Native Reserve lands. In 1891, Alexander Mackay – then Commissioner of Native Affairs – reported that:

“The people residing at the Taiari are in the poorest plight of any of the Native communities. This owing to a great extent to the limited quantity of suitable land for cropping, a large proportion of the Taiari Reserve being altogether unsuitable for any but pastoral purposes.”⁵
43. In that same commission of inquiry, Tieke Hoani Kona reported that Māori “*were disbarred from eeling in the Taieri, owing to it being stocked with trout. Had no eeling place.*”⁶
44. In 1920, when the Taieri River Improvement Act was passed, Kāi Tahu fishing rights were extinguished, and Lake Tatawai was drained. Within ten years of that Act and the draining of the lake, the Kāi Tahu community at Henley (the Kāik) had broken up and dispersed. This was directly connected to the loss of access to and use of Lake Tatawai and traditional mahika kai resources – the loss of freshwater mahika kai meant that whānau had to rely more on the estuaries, harbour, and coastal waters to support themselves. The inadequacy of land reserves or the poor quality of much of that land led to the dispersal of the people from the Kāik. Many of these families and subsequent generations became disconnected from their Kāi Tahu roots.
45. The impact of the loss of mahika kai was highlighted as part of Te Kerēme (the Kāi Tahu Treaty claim). As part of the settlement of the claim, the Sinclair Wetlands (Te

⁴ Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives (1862) I E-10 at 21. There are several spelling errors for the names ascribed to reserve lands in the Ōtākou Block, including for Onumia (corrupted as “Onumai”) and Taiaroa (corrupted as “Tairoa”).

⁵ “Middle Island Native Claims (Report By Mr. Commissioner Mackay Relating To)” (1891) AJHR II, G-07, at 5 (**‘Mackay Report’**).

⁶ Mackay Report at 36.

Nohoaka o Tukiauau) in the Waihora-Waipōuri wetland complex were vested in Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu to redress the loss of Lake Tatawai.⁷ As partial redress for the loss of mahika kai, the Ngāi Tahu Claims Settlement Act 1998 also identifies contemporary nohoaka. These are areas of Crown land adjacent to water bodies that Kāi Tahu whānui are entitled to use seasonally to keep their relationship to wāhi tūpuna alive and to rekindle mahika kai practices. There are three nohoaka (currently not operative) identified along the Taiari River in its middle and upper reaches.⁸

46. Although the provisions in the Ngāi Tahu Claims Settlement Act have reintroduced a small part of the footprint of Kāi Tahu in the Taiari catchment, the concern about displacement and disconnection is ongoing. Development pressures on wāhi tūpuna and on mahika kai resources make it increasingly difficult for whānau to reconnect with the whenua and the wai.

IMPACTS OF PROPOSAL ON KĀI TAHU RELATIONSHIP WITH THE TAIARI AND TE TAI O ĀRAITEURU

Managing activities ki uta ki tai

47. The Taiari Mouth is a dynamic environment shaped by the mixing of wai tai with wai māori. Kāi Tahu seek an integrated approach to the management of activities across the land-freshwater-coastal boundaries, ki uta ki tai (from mountains to sea).
48. From 1992 to 1996, I was employed by Otago Regional Council as Kaitakawaenga, to liaise with mana whenua on policy and plan matters which included the development of the Otago Regional Plan: Coast (**Coast Plan**). I note that the Coast Plan has not been amended to give effect to the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement 2010 (**NZCPS**). In my opinion, there has been a lack of emphasis in the Coast Plan on protection of coastal values.
49. After 1996, I continued as an Ōtākou representative and cultural expert on Council policy and planning matters in our takiwā, including via Kāi Tahu ki Otago Limited (the former name of Aukaha (1997) Ltd), and input on the development of the Otago Regional Plan: Water (**Water Plan**). Within the Water Plan, the Kāi Tahu chapter⁹ and Schedule 1D recognise water bodies of significance to Kāi Tahu. These were included in the Water Plan to enable us to exercise rakatirataka and kaitiakitaka over freshwater, and to provide for the values of our wāhi tūpuna and taoka. Schedule 1D includes a matrix of values for the Taiari awa between Henley and the sea, such

⁷ Ngāi Tahu Claims Settlement Act 1998, section 123.

⁸ Ngāi Tahu Claims Settlement Act 1998, schedule 95 (sites 37, 38 and 39),

⁹ Water Plan, chapter 4.

as mahika kai and trails, and our mana interests in wāhi tapu, wāhi taoka, mauri, and kaitiakitaka.¹⁰

50. In practice, the Water Plan has not proved effective in enabling Kāi Tahu to exercise rakatirataka and kaitiakitaka, nor has it proved effective in providing for Kāi Tahu values and the values of our wāhi tūpuna. Our experience is that mana whenua values are considered narrowly in consent decision-making, rather than in a way that recognises and provides for the interconnected components and values associated with wāhi tūpuna.
51. As a mandated representative for Ōtākou and for Kāi Tahu, I was involved in submissions on the NZCPS and more recently on the development of the Proposed Otago Regional Policy Statement (**pORPS**). The new pORPS represents a big step forward in setting clear direction for all the local authorities in Otago as to how the values, rights and interests of Kāi Tahu in the taiao should be provided for, and how councils need to engage with mana whenua in decision-making and management of the waterbodies, coasts, wāhi tūpuna and taoka species. This will more fully embed the intent of the Settlement Act in RMA processes in the region, ki uta ki tai.
52. A primary resource management goal for mana whenua is the protection of mauri from degradation. While there are many intangible qualities of mauri, there are also elements of physical health that enable mana whenua to assess the strength of the mauri of a location or resource, including:
 - (a) aesthetic qualities, including natural character;
 - (b) the diversity and abundance of indigenous flora and fauna;
 - (c) life supporting capacity and ecosystem robustness; and
 - (d) fitness for cultural use.
53. A resource's mauri is degraded if it no longer supports traditional and contemporary uses and values. Degradation can arise from a range of things, including alteration of food or energy sources, contamination, or physical alterations to its form.
54. If mauri is degraded, this also affects the ability for mana whenua to carry out mahika kai practices. Healthy kai can only be harvested from a healthy environment and an environment that has been degraded by contamination or by intrusion of activities that do not belong there, including noise, artificial light and unnecessary structures, is less likely to be used for mahika kai. Barriers to access are also an ongoing concern.

¹⁰ Water Plan, schedule 1D, Table 4.

55. In terms of the coast, some of the high-level outcomes that Kāi Tahu have sought, and which are now reflected in the pORPS, are:
- (a) recognition and protection of our wāhi tūpuna both in and outside the coastal environment, including recognition and enabling of Kāi Tahu rakatirataka and kaitiakitaka over wāhi tūpuna and taoka;
 - (b) integrated management of activities in the coastal environment so that development or activities would be avoided or set back from the coast unless it was necessary to have those activities there;
 - (c) protection of the mauri of wai māori and wai tai, and enhancement of our mahika kai and habitats to be improved where these have been degraded;
 - (d) ability for whānau and hapū to transmit mātauraka via cultural practices on our awa and at the coast, including mahika kai practices.
56. Ōtākou seeks to protect the mauri and integrity of Te Tai o Āraiteuru and the Taiari wāhi tūpuna for our hapū and whānau, and generations to come. From the knowledge of Ōtākou, the Application is the first of its kind in Otago – there are no other cases where the Council has authorised the occupation of the CMA for private use or visitor accommodation.
57. Coming from whānau with longstanding links to fishing, I appreciate that there are some activities and structures, such as those needed to support launching, berthing and maintenance of boats, that must be located in the CMA because of their purpose. However, visitor accommodation does not have the same functional need. Ōtākou is opposed to private occupation of the CMA for residential and visitor accommodation purposes.
58. The relationship of Ōtākou to the area of Taiari Mouth is integrally bound up with the influence of the awa and the moana and the interconnections between them. Activities that detract from the natural character of the Taiari River and Te Tai o Āraiteuru will have a negative impact on the wāhi tūpuna values associated with the area.
59. In my opinion, the Proposal imparts a degree of permanence and privatisation from converting the existing boatshed into a consolidated building that appears as a residential building. It is my view that the establishment of private residential accommodation is an intrusion into the CMA that will discourage whānau from engaging or re-connecting with cultural practices and mahika kai in the river mouth and estuary. This will further entrench the effects of displacement and disconnection

from the landscape and inhibit the transmission of mātauraka and the exercise of our responsibilities as kaitiaki.

60. Ōtākou consider the Proposal to be incompatible with our associations with our wāhi tūpuna including the awa, the coast, and our Native Reserve lands, and our aspirations to provide opportunities for whānau and hapū to engage with the landscape, pūrākau, and mātauraka – for generations to come.
61. We are greatly concerned at the precedent the Application could set at the Taiari and for the Otago region regarding the use of structures at estuaries, hāpua, and coastline. Ōtākou wants to avoid the situation where boatsheds or structures in our coastal takiwā are authorised for use as private residences and/or temporary visitor accommodation. On this basis, Ōtākou consider the Proposal is an unacceptable activity at the Taiari Mouth.
62. It also concerns us that the name of our reserve land block “Onumia” has been adopted by the applicant for their development without reference to mana whenua or consideration that the activity proposed contravenes our values and interest in this area.

CONCLUSION

63. Mana whenua have an enduring and significant relationship with Taiari and Te Tai o Āraiteuru, as parts of an interconnected and significant cultural landscape handed down from our tūpuna and which we have the responsibility, as kaitiaki, to hand down to the next generations. My evidence has discussed the history of loss experienced by Kāi Tahu in this landscape and the migration of whānau and hapū away from kāika and the Taiari Native Reserve. My evidence has also discussed some of the outcomes sought by Kāi Tahu for the pORPS, relating to protecting and sustaining the mauri of our environment, safeguarding wāhi tūpuna, and ensuring inappropriate development does not eventuate at the coast.
64. Ōtākou seek to protect the integrity of the wāhi tūpuna of Taiari and Te Tai o Āraiteuru from inappropriate development. As an expression of rakatirataka, this includes safeguarding the integrity of our wāhi tāoka and place names that are bound to this landscape.

65. In my opinion, the Proposal will adversely impact the wāhi tūpuna values and mahika kai values associated with this area, through intrusion of activities that will detract from the natural character of the Taiari River and Te Tai o Āraiteuru. Intrusion of private use into this environment will hamper the ability for mana whenua to interact with wāhi tūpuna and to engage in mahika kai activities.

Edward Ellison ONZM

2 September 2025

ANNEXURE A

Glossary of Māori words and phrases

Te reo Māori term	English translation
ahi-kā-roa	the 'long-burning fires' of occupation
ara tawhito	ancestral trails
awa	river
hapū	sub-tribe, clan
harakeke	flax
heke	migration, journey
iwi	extended kinship group, nation
kai	food
kāika	village, settlement
kaitiaki	the person who exercises kaitiakitaka
kaitiakitaka	the exercise of guardianship as an expression of mana and rakatirataka
kanakana	lamprey
karakia	incantations
kaumātua	elders
ki uta ki tai	'from the mountains to the sea' a proverb used to reference the mana whenua preference for integrated and holistic natural resource management
korowai	cloak
kupu whakataki	foreword
mātauraka, mātauraka Māori	knowledge, wisdom, understanding; that of the Māori people
mahika kai	food gathering resources, practices, and sites
mana	prestige, authority, control, power, influence; gained through whakapapa and expressed through the exercise of rakatirataka
mana whenua	the people that are recognised as holding mana over the land in a particular area
manaakitaka	hospitality, generosity, kindness
mauka	mountain(s)
mauri	life force, life essence
mihi	personal introduction
nohoaka	temporary settlement

pā	<i>fortified settlement</i>
papatipu rūnaka	<i>customary governance boards</i>
pūrākau	<i>legend, myth, story</i>
rakatira	<i>leader, chief</i>
rakatirataka	<i>chiefly autonomy</i>
rūnaka	<i>marae-based council</i>
rohe	<i>boundary, district, region</i>
rokoā	<i>traditional medicines</i>
rōpū	<i>group</i>
takiwā	<i>territory</i>
taniwha	<i>spirit, mythical monster</i>
taoka	<i>treasured possession(s)</i>
tapu	<i>a state of being under restriction</i>
tauraka waka	<i>landing site</i>
te taiao	<i>the natural environment</i>
tikaka	<i>a customary system of values and practices</i>
tikaka Kāi Tahu	<i>the customary system of values and practices associated with being Kāi Tahu</i>
tī kōuka	<i>cabbage tree</i>
tūaki	<i>cockles</i>
tuna	<i>long-finned eel</i>
tūpuna	<i>ancestors</i>
ūpoko	<i>customary leader</i>
wai māori	<i>freshwater</i>
wai tai	<i>coastal water</i>
wāhi ikoa	<i>place names</i>
wāhi tūpuna	<i>cultural landscapes</i>
waka	<i>canoe</i>
whakapapa	<i>genealogy</i>
whakawhanaukataka	<i>the process of establishing relationships</i>
whānau	<i>family, extended family</i>
whenua	<i>land, placenta</i>