

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

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

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**BRIEF OF EVIDENCE OF GREG MIRAMS**

**DATED 26 AUGUST 2025**

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## **BRIEF OF EVIDENCE OF GREG MIRAMS**

### **Introduction**

1. My name is Greg Mirams.
2. I am the founder and director of Techion Group Limited. Techion is a digital diagnostics company with a purpose to enable digital intelligence and analysis for animals, people and the environment.
3. My wife Angela and I are directors of Onumai Enterprises Limited, the entity that owns and operates the existing wharf structure which is the subject of this consent application. With my brother and sister, we also own another home within Taieri Mouth that we use ourselves and make available as an Airbnb. It is known as 'The Shed'<sup>1</sup>.
4. We purchased the wharf in early 2022. Since we have owned the wharf, we have undertaken extensive remedial repairs to the structure and have completed its ORC structural engineering compliance. We have removed legacy fishing and boating equipment and have generally cleaned up the site. This has enabled us to use the facility to moor our pleasure boat, safely host friends and family and have time to visualise and discuss how special the site is and how a modern multi-functional facility could be used and shared with others.

### **Mirams relationship with Taieri Mouth**

5. The Mirams's have a long family connection with the area, dating back to the 1890's when my great grandfather, Samuel Mirams, used to

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<sup>1</sup>

[https://www.airbnb.co.nz/rooms/31389078?location=Dunedin%20Otago%20NZ&search\\_mode=regular\\_search&adults=1&check\\_in=2025-08-05&check\\_out=2025-08-10&children=0&infants=0&pets=0&source\\_impression\\_id=p3\\_1754259997\\_P3QpWvG2JUvYmgZd&previous\\_page\\_section\\_name=1001&federated\\_search\\_id=e00f6065-f4b3-420d-bc2a-5e9cc0ef0538](https://www.airbnb.co.nz/rooms/31389078?location=Dunedin%20Otago%20NZ&search_mode=regular_search&adults=1&check_in=2025-08-05&check_out=2025-08-10&children=0&infants=0&pets=0&source_impression_id=p3_1754259997_P3QpWvG2JUvYmgZd&previous_page_section_name=1001&federated_search_id=e00f6065-f4b3-420d-bc2a-5e9cc0ef0538)

holiday in the settlement. Samuel Mirams, an Architect and Engineer was appointed in 1866 to the position of City Surveyor Dunedin. Engineer. He was responsible for the sewage system, roading, sea walls and water supply. He is best known for developments within the Town Belt including Queen's Drive, Woodhaugh Garden and the Northern Cemetery.

6. Samuel's son, John Mirams (my grandfather) owned property in Taieri Mouth and was actively involved in the community even though he resided permanently in Dunedin. Successive generations have owned property in the settlement culminating in Angela and I, along with my brother Phil and sister Sue, owning our father's property north of the river, on Taieri Mouth Road. This property has been renovated from a working shed, to a family holiday home and is also available for short term rental.
7. Other connections include my aunt Win Parkes (property owner in Taieri Mouth), who has co-authored two well-known books on the history of Taieri Mouth and my cousin Dr Margot Parkes, who has undertaken research and published scientific papers on the Taieri River and its tributaries.
8. As a child, my family spent most summers in and around the Taieri Mouth community. At that time, the fishing industry was at its peak, and the Marine Parade/wharf area was a hive of activity day and night. Following the demise of the fishing industry from the late 1990s, the Marine Parade area has in part, fallen into a state of disrepair. Today the area hosts a few recreational boats and fisherman, but little other activity. The issuing of a consent for a takeaway café in recent times, brings a welcome sense of optimism that the area may again be invigorated. We are hoping to build on that with our proposal, and through sympathetic and quality design, start to encourage further improvement to the area as it continues to transition and evolve.

9. With Dunedin City and Dunedin airport just 30 minutes' drive away, the Taieri Mouth community has also changed to being a beautiful place to live and commute to Dunedin, or an easily accessible recreational/leisure activity destination, where holiday and weekend getaways are common. Although this change in the community is apparent, over the past 30 years there have been no new community amenities or facilities added to support these changing community needs.
  
10. Our motivation to commit to the project under the public resource consent process is underpinned by multiple drivers:
  - (a) A deep and passionate connection to the area and how special the river/sea experience is at Taieri Mouth.
  
  - (b) To build a low impact and sympathetic, multi-use community/private facility to support the regional and Taieri Mouth communities.
  
  - (c) Utilise local historical architectural inspiration to integrate the facility into the existing surrounds.
  
  - (d) Create local employment and attract commercial activity into the local community.
  
  - (e) Build and operate the facility under a commercial model that can support the development investment and ongoing activity costs related to the facility, including making it available to the community for use and providing the disability access facilities.
  
  - (f) To enable the disabled community to safely access and enjoy the near water related activities and accommodation experiences in the same way that able bodied people do to address existing facility inequities.

- (g) Having been personally involved in search and rescue events at Taieri Mouth, we understand how a lack of local facilities can impact the outcome of an emergency. The proposed facility could be used as a command centre, that includes all tide boat access, a wharf side crane, Wi-Fi communications, bed and bathroom facilities where immediate triage care could be provided. This type of infrastructure does not exist anywhere on the Taieri River. The facility would compliment and expand existing emergency services infrastructure and will de-risk and add capability to the local community. Guests staying in the facility will agree as a condition of stay, that in the event of emergency, first responders will have priority access and use of the facility.
  - (h) Angela and I have had real world experience in running a successful, quality 5-star accommodation experience in the Taieri Mouth community for the past six years. “The Shed” is ranked in the top 1% globally of Airbnb properties to rent. Angela has also been recognised by Airbnb by awarding her Super Host status for the past five years. In experiencing the challenges faced by the traveling disabled community, New Zealand simply doesn’t have a facility of this type. If approved, it would put Taieri Mouth on the map as a destination and experience for the disabled community. Based on our experience and research (including discussions with the likes of Ms Grant) we believe there is a genuine opportunity to generate sustainable income we need to develop and fund the operation of the facility, but also provide a wonderful opportunity to the disabled community that is widely lacking.
11. As detailed in the application, we have consulted extensively with a wide range of relevant stakeholders. These groups include, regional and local government agencies, schools and outdoor pursuit organisations, local Iwi representatives, Aukaha (regional Rununga), disability agencies and providers. In addition, local engagement and

consultation has included a public hall meeting, open days at the wharf, and a pre-hearing meeting.

12. With respect to Iwi consultation, Angela and I initially consulted with local iwi representatives who were receptive and supportive of the proposal. They then referred the proposal with their recommendation to Aukaha. Through other local iwi contacts, they facilitated an introduction to Aukaha and we were offered a face-to-face meeting to discuss the proposal. Having initially agreeing to meet, Aukaha then changed their mind. We then wrote to Aukaha directly addressing their submission points. We did not receive a response to our written report. At the ORC pre-hearing, Aukaha again agreed to meet, only to then decline us again. In total, I sent 14 emails to Aukaha over several months, made numerous phone calls, our lawyer contacted them and I also made enquiries via my business contacts. We were left with no further options to engage Iwi to discuss the proposal and the concerns they had raised in their submission.

### **Building Design**

13. Extensive design consideration has been undertaken on the appearance of the building. This has involved the referencing of local historical buildings and their role in the community. A Dunedin heritage architect was engaged with a brief to combine historic reference, integration within the local surrounds incorporating form and function into the design. The design was tested within the pre-hearing process where some changes were made to the original design to accommodate feedback from stakeholders. These changes have included:

- (a) Extending the eave on the waterfront side
- (b) Adding the slats on the waterfront side

14. I wish to note that the changes on the waterfront side were not our preference. They were in response to the concerns raised in the first landscape peer review. Our preference was for the building to have a more utilitarian appearance on that frontage.
15. The outer footprint of the building is contained within the existing east/west and northern aspects of the existing container/cool store structures, with the exception that the gap between the exist structures which would be included into the building. The only additional change would be related to the engineering “pinning” of the building to the land on the southern end of the building.
16. The proposal includes two storage areas at the rear of the building which will be used for the wastewater tanks etc and for recreational equipment associated with the facility, such as fishing gear etc. There are then two bedrooms – one with a queen bed, and a separate room bunk room. Both of these rooms are closed off from the waterfront. This is so the kitchen, living area fronts to the water which would be where people would concentrate their activities if it is used as a day facility or for community events etc. Furniture in this area will be easily reconfigured for day activities. Then there is the single full disability bathroom facility which is accessed from the back of the main room. There will be a ramp that facilitates access from within the building to the wharf.
17. There is an existing storage cupboard which holds the operational controls for the crane etc. We will also use this for equipment etc. Kayaks etc are stored on racks on the pontoon, as they are now.
18. The crane/hoist is located outside and will not require access to the building to operate it. I provide further detail regarding this below. The proposed new access ramp will provide wheelchair accessible access from the landward side along the building to the wharf. We want to install a gate at the end for health and safety reasons so a person can't

'runaway' off the edge of the Wharf. However, the gate will be open and we propose to install signage that will make this clear to people so that they may access the wharf if they wish.

### **Motivation for providing accessible facilities**

19. Throughout my childhood and before, our family has holidayed at Taieri Mouth. I have watched my mother manage and live with the lifelong physical limitations resulting from her polio disability. Being able to enjoy the river environment, boating or even safely being close to the water is an experience she could not access or enjoy. Should we be able to build this facility, we will be providing a safe, inclusive and accessible environment for my mother and others in her community to enjoy the same activities that able bodied people enjoy. This includes passive opportunities to simply sit on the wharf or more active water-based activities.
20. Over the past 9 years we have watched and supported life in a wheelchair through spending time with our friend Sally Barkman. We have hosted Sally and her husband Scott at the Shed and have travelled with her in other parts of New Zealand. The daily challenges of life in a wheelchair are brutally hard, then you add the lack of accessible infrastructure, the shortage of fit for purpose accommodation and the result is that life becomes severely restricted. Through this project, we believe we can make a small difference for people that find themselves living in the wheelchair world. It is something that we feel very passionate about.
21. We have spoken with the likes of Mr Marrable about the requirements for the building which have informed and continue to inform the design of the proposal. For example, the need for two bedrooms so that those people who rely on a carer can utilise the facility. We understand from Mr Marrable that many 'accessible' accommodation facilities do not



provide this which limits the number of people that can actually stay in those 'accessible rooms', or requires two rooms to be booked.

22. Through our own experiences of boating and water access for people with disabilities in the tidal Taieri river environment, we have re-purposed the original wharf crane and added a custom lift harness. We have restored, modified and re-instated the floating pontoon and have added wheelchair ramp access. Further ramp access from the road will be required to enable direct access from the wharf to the road. These modifications will enable safe, all tide access to and from boats, water access for swimming for people with disabilities and support infrastructure for emergency services. Nothing of this nature is available within Taieri Mouth currently and very few options more widely within the Otago region.

#### **How generating income will facilitate use of the site for disability access**

23. High quality disability accessible accommodation facilities are rare to find, as they are expensive to build and maintain due to their bespoke features and functional requirements. There is a clear community need for more of these facilities and a community prepared to pay for using them. A sustainable commercial model is essential to support the building and ongoing viability of the facility.
24. The wharf and hoist have ongoing maintenance and inspection requirements, particularly when it is being made available to the public. Our local body councils simply do not have the resources to build and maintain facilities of this type for our community. A self-funded private and community partnership approach is one way we can support more amenities of this type being built in and operating in our communities.
25. Whilst we want as many disabled people to use the facility as possible, we are realistic about this, particularly early on. We anticipate that it will

take time for the facility to build momentum within the disabled community alone. Without this market group being tested, we don't know that it will be large enough to be economically sustainable on its own – although if we are wrong about that it would great. For this reason, we want to retain the ability for the facility to be available to able-bodied people too.

26. With the proposed 180 night accommodation limit, we will have an occupancy of less than 50%. Most viable commercial accommodation providers rely on an occupancy rate in excess of 60%. We anticipate that we will be able to generate some additional income from day use of the facility. We are not seeking that it operates on purely commercial terms as we will utilise it ourselves from time to time. However, in order to justify the additional costs associated with making provision for the disabled access, and ongoing operation and maintenance of facilities such as the crane and pontoon we do need to generate a reasonable income from the facility.
27. Our intention is to work with providers like Ms Grant to build our facility onto their tour offerings and that overtime the proportion of disabled people utilising the facility will increase. We also see opportunities to work with other tourism operators in the area to build combined packages that expand the market for those other business.

#### **Other benefits of the proposal**

28. Use by:
  - (a) The safe hosting and control of sporting and recreational events could be supported by a facility of this type. There is currently no all-tide access infrastructure that provides the proposed infrastructure resources on the Taieri river. Our discussions with outdoor education providers and schools have indicated that there would be a lot of enthusiasm for access to our facility.

- (b) Having consulted members of the first responder community, they have highlighted there is a weather-related operational risk in the Taieri Mouth area that could impact an emergency response. Of primary concern is a fog event that would limit or eliminate a helicopter response. Also of concern, is the response to a larger river or sea event where a local control centre, patient transfer and initial triage resources would be highly valued by first responders.
  - (c) Taieri Mouth is a seasonally busy recreational fishing area. In addition, the pleasure boating traffic in the summer months is high given its is a boatable waterway with easy accessibility from Dunedin. Agencies like MPI fisheries officers and the local harbour master have limited options when undertaking educational and compliance activities on the river. These agencies have indicated they would utilise the facility to base river related events at Taieri Mouth.
29. The other benefit of the proposal that we are willing to offer, is a contribution from accommodation income towards a Taieri Mouth preservation group. This was a matter that was discussed at our public meeting. Whilst it was interpreted negatively by a small group, it is a genuine proposal that we want to make to contribute to the community efforts within the Taieri Mouth Area. We are proposing 3% of any accommodation income would be made by way of a contribution to local preservation activities.

### **How the operation will run**

30. As noted above, we are experienced Airbnb operators. We plan to run the facility to the same 5-star standard as we operate at the Shed. We expect that we will need to employ additional local support staff to operate the facility. Alongside Airbnb, we anticipate that organisations or individuals from the disability community will also book their

accommodation directly. We plan to operate the accommodation under a minimum and maximum nights stay approach to ensure availability is maintained.

31. This facility has not been designed or intended to be a permanent residence. To further support this intent, accommodation nights will be restricted with a maximum continuous guest stay period of 5 nights. We also propose a maximum number of nights in a year at 180 nights.
32. Alongside an Airbnb listing, the facility will also have its own dedicated website. The site will enable groups and individuals to enquire directly regarding use of the facility on a day basis. It will also host important information regarding the conditions of stay, maintaining public access and how to use the crane and other facilities on the wharf.
33. To ensure community groups/public information initiatives (such as Fisheries or Harbourmaster) can access and utilise the facility, 6 days per annum will be set aside (booked) so the facility can be made available for these groups. We would operate this on a first in first serve basis where community groups/organisations can contact us to book a day. Based on the conversations that we have had with schools and organisations such as Parafed etc, we also anticipate that there will be demand for day usage by these type groups.
34. While the building will be locked when guests are staying or when the building is not in use, public access to the wharf will be maintained. Use of the crane will be managed via a QR code link to the website where the crane user can register. Upon reading the instructions and accepting the conditions of use, a lock code will be issued so the crane and equipment can be operated safely. This will give the person access to the storage area where the control box is located and the hoist harness etc.

35. The facility will be fully serviced after each event or accommodation booking. All rubbish will be removed from the site at each service. Water and sewage holding tanks levels will be electronically monitored (alarmed) to ensure tank filling and emptying occurs at the appropriate times. As a condition of use, all facility users will be made aware that first responders will have priority access to the facility in the case of an emergency response.

## **Conclusions**

36. It begins with a vision to create a special place in a special place. To create a commercially sound, sustainable and environmentally sympathetic enterprise that supports a new amenity in the Taieri Mouth community. An amenity that enables an accommodation experience and access to a special waterway and surrounding area for all, regardless of physical abilities. It's been a three-year journey thus far, with widespread consultation, open conversations and working through an intense and detailed consent process.
37. It's not an easy or low-cost process to go through, however we believe the process has informed and shaped this proposal and will result in the best possible outcome.

Dated 26 August 2025

G Mirams