

**BEFORE A HEARING PANEL CONSTITUTED BY
NELSON CITY COUNCIL**

IN THE MATTER

of an application by CCKV Maitahi
Development Co LP and Bayview
Nelson Limited for a plan change to the
Nelson Resource Management Plan (Plan
Change 28)

IN THE MATTER

of Part 5 and Schedule 1 of the Resource
Management Act 1991

STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF ROD DIXON

Applicant's Consultant:

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— BARRISTER —

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- [1] My name is Rod Dixon, and this statement relates to the production of a document on behalf of 'Save the Matai' that purports to be a statement from me published on the Council website.
- [2] I was involved early in the 'Save the Matai' group because I used to run around the area affected by the plan change. Initially, much information about the potential impact of that plan change concerned me. Hence my interest in the matter. Over time, however, I realised that much of the information I was given was inaccurate. I was content for the process to run based on the evidence before the Panel. I did not wish to be involved actively.
- [3] I understand a statement published on the Council's website that the lawyer prepared for 'Save the Matai' called Sally Gepp. I was first alerted to this yesterday, having had no previous knowledge of it. That statement was not prepared with my input and does not represent my views.
- [4] I ask the Panel to direct the removal of that statement from the website, and I have asked Ms Gepp to cease and desist from producing statements in my name that I do not authorise.

Dated 12 July 2022 



Rodney Dixon

**BEFORE A HEARINGS PANEL
APPOINTED BY NELSON CITY COUNCIL**

IN THE MATTER of Private Plan Change 28 – Maitahi Bayview

**AND IN THE MATTER of Clause 21 of the First Schedule of the Resource
Management Act 1991**

**EVIDENCE OF ROD DIXON FOR SAVE THE MAITAI INC
THE MAITAI VALLEY ON THE PATH TO THE OLYMPICS AND
BEYOND**

DATED 11 JULY 2022

Counsel: Sally Gepp
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INTRODUCTION

1. My full name is Rod Dixon. I grew up in Nelson, had a successful career in international athletics, culminating in winning an Olympic medal and the New York Marathon, and subsequently established the Kid's Marathon Foundation in the USA. I care deeply about Nelson and in particular the Maitai Valley, to which I have strong ties. Inspired by a discussion with Sir Edmund Hillary, I devote my time to improving the lives of the next generation.

SUMMARY

2. The Maitai Valley is a unique environment that is highly valued for its tranquil rural setting, beautiful landscape, recreational opportunities, lack of development, and easy accessibility by the community.
3. These qualities of the valley were an aid and inspiration for me in training as an international athlete, just as they are for someone on a peaceful Sunday stroll or kids cycling up the valley for a swim.
4. I'm asking for the plan change request to be rejected because I would like to think that future generations would have the same opportunity to experience the joys of the Maitai Valley that my generation did.

INFORMATION RELIED UPON

5. I have not read all of the information that has been lodged in relation to PPC28, but I have looked at the most recent Structure Plan in Mr Milne's evidence so that I understand in a general sense what type of development is proposed. I have also seen the indicative plan provided with the applicant's rebuttal evidence.

EVIDENCE

Introduction

6. I spent my childhood in the suburb of Tahunanui and in the vast green spaces and unspoilt countryside valley of the Maitai. I still live in this region. When I heard about the proposed rezoning of the valley I couldn't believe it. I'm here because I feel a strong responsibility to do my bit to uphold the values of the community and protect the Maitai Valley.

Value of the Maitai Valley

7. I want to make sure that the next generations have the same chance to experience the joys of the Maitai that my generation did. I want the commissioners to know how much joy the valley has given me throughout my life and to so many others and how deeply in our hearts we feel the threat to it.
8. As a child, the Maitai was much treasured by our family. All of us - Mum, Dad and us kids - loved going to picnic there and to enjoy the swimming holes. Black Hole was our favourite spot. And as well as picnicking and swimming, us kids would bike and run and play barefoot for hours in the valley, surrounded by the green hills. You can't put a price on those childhood experiences. It's exactly those sorts of simple joys that make us the envy of the world.
9. As an adult I continued to spend time in the valley I knew and loved so well. I spent countless hours running there and I did a lot of my training for the 1972 Olympics in the beautiful surrounds of the Maitai.
10. On my runs I saw people of all ages and abilities out and about - running, like me, or walking, biking, swimming, playing cricket, kicking a ball, reading in the shade of a tree, or pushing grandkids in strollers in the sunshine. We all had in common the deep enjoyment of being in such a beautiful and peaceful place.

Lessons from New York

11. I spend quite a bit of time these days in the United States running the Kids Marathon programme. I know that currently there is pressure to supply housing but I think we can learn a lot from New York.
12. Between 1830 and 1860 the population of New York tripled and the demand for housing was acute. But the council, business people and environmentalists came together with great foresight to protect an area of land for the benefit of the city's people for all time. That area is Central Park.
13. Nearly 200 years on, the value that Central Park provides the city's people far outweighs the housing that might have been built on the site. That decision has been judged by both history and the many generations that have enjoyed the park over the last two centuries to have overwhelmingly been right.

14. I consider the Maitai Valley to be Nelson's Central Park and I believe we should protect the valley for the wellbeing of future generations.

The physical wellbeing of the next generation

15. Twenty years ago I started the Kids Marathon programme to get kids - ordinary kids - active. One of the obstacles to kids being active these days is the steady loss of outdoor spaces where they can roam and play, the sort of unspoilt havens such as the Maitai Valley which kids have always naturally gravitated too.
16. I've been in talks with local schools and sponsors in Nelson for 18 months now around the Kids Marathon programme getting underway here. Right from the start there was no question in anyone's minds about the ideal spot for it to take place - the Maitai.
17. Kids having the chance to run along the beautiful river surrounded by trees and peaceful countryside is exactly the experience everybody wants them to have. Would the kids' experience of running be greatly affected if there was the constant sound of cars along the valley road drowning out the birds and the river, and houses filling the hillslopes and the sound of leaf-blowers and stereos? Of course it would.
18. One of the things that gets people hooked on being active, whether it's running or biking or walking, is the pleasure they get from the surroundings they're in. The way you feel at the end of a run in the Maitai is very different to the end of a run in an urban area. The way the kids will feel at the end of their run in a rural Maitai is very different to the way they would feel if the Maitai becomes a residential zone

Effects of the proposed subdivision

19. The Kids Marathon will be joining many other events which take place in the Maitai Valley and there are many community groups who use the area too. It's safe to say that none of these events and community activities would be enhanced by a large subdivision in the Maitai and most would be negatively impacted.
20. Over and over again, in their thousands via the petition and submissions, Nelson's people have made it clear that the Maitai is highly treasured and that development is strongly opposed. Because the bottom line is, they know that this proposed subdivision and the others that would inevitably follow a rezoning would forever change the valley.

21. People go to the Maitai to walk and swim and cycle precisely because it's a peaceful and idyllic haven. But if a highly visible sweep of green is replaced with concrete and hundreds of houses, and the valley floor becomes abuzz with cars, the peace and quiet would be shattered. The rural character of the valley would be lost forever. A great tragedy would unfold - this beautiful river valley on Nelson's doorstep would become just another suburb.
22. It would no longer be a place where children and adults want to go - to roam or play or escape the stresses of daily life, because those stresses would then exist in the valley itself. The damage would have been done.
23. A great concern for me is the precedent that would be set if the proposed rezoning were to be approved. I am aware that Nelson City Council has also identified a development area (Orchard Flats) on the other side of the Maitai River from the PPC28 site. If the rezoning considered at this hearing were to go ahead, then Orchard Flats would surely be next, and then the main recreation area in the entire valley would be overlooked by large subdivisions on both sides. Swimmers and families enjoying a picnic would be sandwiched between noisy suburbs and have to endure large volumes of traffic in an area that so many previous generations have treasured as a rural paradise.

Protecting the Maitai Valley for future generations

24. It is unfathomable to me that urban development could occur in this precious landscape, given that the Maitai is the jewel in Nelson's crown. Cities around the world are crying out for open green spaces like the Maitai. How many of the untouched, pristine, peaceful river valleys within easy reach of the city are now left? One. Just one.
25. I'm asking that it be protected and I am certain that both history and future generations will judge this to be right. I'm asking you to preserve this unique and special place, so easily accessed by all and treasured by thousands.
26. I had the privilege when I was in my twenties of meeting one of my heroes - Sir Edmund Hillary. I still remember my knees quaking as I walked up the path to his front door. At the end of our meeting he said something to me I've never forgotten: "make sure you do something in your life for the next generation." I've spent the last

two decades doing that through the Kids Marathon and I'm doing that today by speaking to the commissioners on behalf of future generations who don't yet have a voice.

OUTCOME SOUGHT

27. I'm asking that this valley be preserved for the next generations, so that they too will have rich childhoods and memories they will cherish all their lives.
28. On this basis I am asking for the plan change request to be declined.

Rod Dixon

11 July 2022