

Tēnā Koutou

My name is Maree Sharland. I live in Nelson, and care very much about it's people.

My professional life has mostly been as a tenancy mediator, so I have a good understanding of housing issues.

The implications of the Proposed Plan Change 28 have forced me to focus on what wellbeing means, and what impact such a large housing subdivision in the Kākā Valley would have on the Maitai, Nelson and it's people, now and in the future.

I am here today to tell you about what the Maitai means to myself, my family and my friends and help you understand how devastating such a subdivision would be to Nelson, and it's people.

Family Connection

The Maitai Valley has been ever present in my life. My family's connection to the valley commenced in 1862 when my Great Great Grandfather James Henry Sharland purchased land in the area now known as Sharland's Gully. His property "Greenlands" was steep and covered in native bush.

He acquired 213 acres, cleared enough bush to run sheep and cattle, and construct water races from the upper reaches of the gully and around the hillside to provide sufficient water to run a Flax Mill, that he established on land leased from the Richardsons. In later life James Henry moved to the lower reaches of the River near Collingwood Street, and his sons James and George continued with the farm and flax mill, while establishing other mills in the top of the South.

In 1913 James and Jessie, my great grandparents, purchased land on the banks of the Maitai, by Clouston Bridge on Nile Street, where they established another flax mill and rope walk, but that was short lived. Ironically, given the current concerns about PPC 28 , the then City Council was seemingly more enlightened than the current regime, as it promptly closed the business down citing noise, and pollution of the River!

Upon their marriage in 1928, my grandparents moved to a house beyond the Sharland's Gully flax mill where they managed, for a time, to eke out a living on the land.

In 1936 during the depression, after 74 years of Sharland ownership in the Gully, they sold to Queenie Richardson and left the Maitai. While that ended the Sharland holding in the Maitai, my Grandfather continued his relationship with the valley until his death.

With Jack Bennett (from another early Maitai family) he worked the Tantragee over into the Maitai, felling trees, removing timber with a horse and sledge, and also using a chute they constructed on the Maitai side that emerged just north of the Sunday Hole Ford.

The timber was sold for firewood and Queenie was paid "royalties."

My own relationship with the Maitai is layered with many 'Sharland legends,' but also as an urban kid growing up on the banks of the Maitai. We spent hours in the river lifting rocks to catch cock-a-bullys, night time eeling, on our bikes up the valley, making huts in the Scouts' Gully, bonfire nights at the quarry, pig hunting up Kākā, floods, walking my dog, and swimming, swimming and swimming - from Girlies Hole, to Bennetts', to Black Hole, to Dennes and to Sunday Hole - this on repeat, all day, everyday, all summer, year after year.

Despite not being raised in Nelson East, my own children have their own relationships with the Maitai. Family picnics, swimming, games of backyard cricket, Clara running and walking her beautiful dog Luca, Greta, on training runs up and down the Centre of New Zealand, up Sharland's and Packer's, and Oscar on his bike, cricket and dabbling in golf. Late last year Covid conspired to force the cancellation of his marriage, but it was the Maitai to the rescue, when Oscar and Lucy were married in a family wedding overlooking the valley, adding to our family history - a family that has the Maitai River flowing through it's veins. Our Turangawaewae.

So while my grandparents, great grandparents and great great grandparents relied upon the valley for their livelihoods, later generations of my family have relied on the Maitai for recreation, for peace and solitude and for getting back to nature.

Qualities of the Maitai

Landforms

We treasure the Maitai for it's landforms - it gives us a sense of place and identity. The valley is the green backdrop to our lives, visible throughout the city, a wonderful visual connection that says "this is Nelson"

Kākā Hill is the dominant focal point heading up the valley, a constant comforting landmark in a changing world. Kākā gives us a taste of things to come

chiaroscuro, light and dark
open and closed
expansive and more intimate

Magnificent too, the frequent mist - moody, brooding, cold!

Imagine what da Vinci or Caravaggio would have done with such beauty. How lucky we are we to see and enjoy it, in it's many forms each and every day.

Rural Idyll

How proud I am to take friends from away, up the Valley. They are envious of our taonga, such a peaceful rural idyll so close to the city. Heading up the valley from the Clouston Bridge immediately invokes a sense of calm, of quiet, of freedom, of open green spaces, of solitude, of fresh air. There we leave our urban lives behind. We walk, bike, run, walk dogs, picnic, sit quietly and read - all for free and all in relative safety.

The River and Swimming Holes

The Maitai River hasn't been blessed by being granted 'personhood' as has the Whanganui, but to us the river is a living being - the river has mana and mauri. The numerous swimming holes in the Maitai are walking distance from the city.

I can close my eyes and see generations of Central School kids walking up Nile Street, with their beach towels, and nowadays with their colourful hats, heading for an afternoon of fun at Black Hole or Dennes. Summer in Nelson!

Recreation

Much of what I love about the Maitai Valley is the way it embraces so many different forms of recreation - from individual pursuits to organised events. When I was young, the valley was used by hikers, hunters, people fishing, horse riding, runners, swimmers and picnickers. Now the pursuits are more varied. The valley has the ability to embrace peoples' changing needs and interests. Golf is popular again, mountain bikers are now commonplace, COVID 19 and lockdowns brought new people to the valley. What a perfect foil for the pandemic!

The Maitai caters for us holistically - our physical, mental, spiritual and social needs. We derive this nourishment from a unique place - a place that is greater than the sum of it's parts.

Consultation

I move on now, to the Council's response to the issue of urban sprawl in the Maitai.

Adequate consultation is a crucial aspect of any democracy and an essential statutory requirement. Unfortunately the Nelson City Council has completely failed to discharge it's duty of consultation. Generations of Nelsonians have spoken and expressed a strong desire to keep the Maitai rural. Despite this clearly articulated view, the 2019 Future Development Strategy (which lacked transparency) seemed tailor-made for the proposal that is now on the table.

Nelson was taken by surprise, but in the two years since the Council's intention has been made clear, a grass roots movement has formed, and again Nelsonians say "hands off the Maitai."

Hundreds of people made submissions against urban sprawl in the Maitai to the 2022 version of the FDS - but all to no avail, nothing but a 'YES, BUT' response, with Council Staff and Council Leadership continuing to ignore the views of Nelsonians and other valley users.

There is no mandate to pursue subdivisions in the Maitai.

Adverse Effects of PPC 28

This Proposed Plan Change threatens all that we value in the Maitai and should be rejected.

It does not comply with the Resource Management Act 1991 in many critical aspects and if the subdivision was to proceed, that failure to comply will have an adverse effect on the lives of myself, my family and friends.

Destruction of Landforms

The site of the proposed subdivision can be viewed from the Maitai Valley, the central city and of course the iconic Centre of New Zealand. The views are green and rural and will be destroyed by excavation, housing, roading and the movement of thousands of vehicles. The proposal isn't an extension to an already existing urban area, or a subtle modification to a natural environment, but a wholesale carving up of the beautiful backdrop to Nelson.

Replacing that rural idyll with urban sprawl is unthinkable.

Noise Pollution

The peaceful, rural sounds of the Maitai will change forever if this proposal is allowed.

The valley will groan under the sound of urbanisation - firstly with years of excavation and construction and then the noise of urban life - cars, motorbikes, sirens, alarms, rubbish collection, lawn mowers and leaf blowers - the silence of the valley today, will be gone.

River and Swimming Hole Pollution

If the Proposed Plan Change is permitted, what will happen to our wonderful river?

Already struggling because of the negative effects of the pine plantations and the dam, somehow the Maitai River remains a life-force for the valley and downtown Nelson. Hundreds of houses in the Kākā will inevitably create pollution - from the massive excavation, the construction work, from sewage, sedimentation and storm water run-off, from garden sprays, fertilisers and all the other 'conveniences' of urban life. The River and its fabulous swimming holes; Girlies Hole, Black Hole and Dennes would all be adversely impacted by a subdivision in the Kākā. The deterioration of the down stream swimming holes will naturally lead to Sunday Hole becoming over populated, and the essence of the Maitai will be lost.

What will that mean to our people? The Maitai is Nelson's last rural valley. Should we carpool and drive to Brightwater to find a swimming hole?

This Proposed Plan Change 28 throws up too many unanswered questions - too many **ifs** and **buts** - mitigation is not protection.

Historical Heritage

There is still much to be discovered about our historical heritage in the Maitai and along its river banks. Time and successive floods means that already much has been lost.

The excavation of metre after cubic metre of soil and then the tons of concrete that will replace the landforms will surely remove any remaining traces of our historical heritage.

What of the Chinese gardeners at Almond Tree Flat, Nellies Flat and then later on their market gardens around Dennes?

Adverse effects of Increased Traffic

The greatly increased traffic that would ensue if urban sprawl into the Maitai is allowed, is one of the most dangerous aspects of this proposal. The cost to Nelson and to Nelsonians would be just too high.

The developers claim that many residents of the proposed Kākā subdivision would bike and walk to their schools and places of work. This is naive at best. The likelihood that families will send youngsters down the valley, on foot or by bike, in the depth of a Maitai winter, to a school on the other side of town, with all the increased traffic that the subdivision will create, is pure fantasy!

What would this massive increase in traffic mean? Firstly, the urban/rural boundary of the town will extend through the lower reaches of the valley to beyond Gibbs's Bridge.

The peaceful neighbourhoods of Nelson East will be destroyed by the scramble to build in the valley with, traffic, noise and pollution. Thousands of extra vehicle movements on a daily basis will make the neighbouring streets and the Maitai Valley much less safe for residents, walkers, cyclists and dog walkers. Children and staff at Central School on Nile Street will be right in the firing line.

Increased Air Pollution

Air pollution in Nelson East is already an issue. The surrounding hills create a 'holding pen' for exhaust fumes and residential fires. The huge increase in vehicle movement up to the Kākā subdivision will create levels of nitrogen dioxide that is totally unacceptable.

A recent New Zealand study measuring the health impacts of nitrogen dioxide has shocked even the scientists. The study shows that the pollutant is a major factor in stroke, heart disease, lung cancer and chronic respiratory diseases. The study further shows that Nelson already has more per capita deaths from traffic pollution than Auckland does.

Creating yet another car reliant neighbourhood is outdated thinking, perpetuating the mistakes of the past.

Impact of Urban Sprawl, Climate and Biodiversity Crisis

This Proposed Plan Change, if approved, will lead the charge on urban sprawl into the Maitai. Orchard Flats are already on the current Council's wishlist.

Urban sprawl is a major threat to the sustainability of the planet and to the lives of our people.

Developers attempt to tame nature by pouring concrete, that entombs vast tracks of soil, constipates the rivers and chokes wildlife habitats.

Of course, developers will almost always prefer greenfield developments on the peripheries of towns, over the complexities of brownfield regeneration, but Government and Councils must promote smart towns, high density towns, that are multi centered and have green and residential areas all within walkable distance to schools, businesses and other amenities - brownfield developments that tap into existing infrastructure and public transport hubs.

We must respond NOW to the climate and biodiversity crisis. The conversion of rural areas to housing estates, which promote car reliant communities, must be rejected.

Land is a finite commodity, and we must provide for the physical, mental, spiritual and social needs of future generations. Nelson will eventually grow up - figuratively and literally - and for all those new apartment and townhouse dwellers the Maitai will become even more precious.

In Conclusion

I ask that the **Proposed Plan Change 28** be rejected, so that the mana and life force of the Maitai Valley and it's river is able to flourish and continue to enhance and nourish the lives of Nelsonians and visitors, now and into the future.

Thankyou

Maree Sharland, Nelson