

Tēnā koutou katoa

Thank you, Commissioners, for listening.

You have a summary of my statement. My apologies for not getting a full statement in to you earlier. I'll go through it now with reference to some graphics.

My name is Wendy Barker and I strongly oppose Private Plan Change 28 due to its likely negative impact on the Maitai River, its valley and its surrounds. I was one of over 13,000 people who signed the petition opposing the plan change, nearly **25%** of Nelson's population.

On Wednesday, in answer to a question from Commissioner Hill, Mr Spittal seemed nonplussed by the objections to his proposed development and their suggestion that it would detract from the area. Just a few of the negative impacts that I envisage include:

- increased traffic, noise and air pollution
- the loss of the natural character of parts of the river and valley, and therefore of certain rural views
- pollution and sedimentation of the Kaka Stream and Maitai River and the detrimental effect on the ecology and water quality

The Applicants' evidence has failed to convince me that these impacts would not eventuate. Any one of them would detract from the enjoyment of the area by so many people, with possible, or even probable, harmful effect on their health and well-being.

Next slide (*satellite view*)

This shows the area under discussion. My focus is on the Kākā Valley since it includes the Kākā Stream catchment area which feeds into the Maitai River. I also focus on the impact on the rural nature of the Centre of NZ/Botanical Hill recreational area and its surrounds, including the part shown here as Branford Park. There are many more walkways in that treed area than can be seen here, with views over the Kākā Valley. There is also a site of special significance on that hillside.

The river at the bottom centre of the picture is the location of the swimming-holes and other features that I will talk about later.

Mr Spittal dismissed submitters' concerns because, he said, and I quote, "we're not touching Branford Park...we're building **up** in the Kaka Valley". I find this comment to be, at best, naive. The Kaka Valley is not "up"; it is not remote. Part of PPC28 proposes 350 houses on the flat, directly adjacent to Kākā Stream and the Maitai River, and adjoining the area shown here as Branford Park.

One other point at this stage: the publicity around the need for more housing is being used by some as a reason to support PPC28. However, I have noted recent reports questioning the validity of this view and have sent you links to these two articles.

Next slide (*stuff articles*)

[*\(Could we be building too many houses? | Stuff.co.nz\)*](#)

[*\(NZ gained 27,000 homes last year while population growth hit 31-year low | Stuff.co.nz\)*](#)

Briefly, they say that the demand for housing in New Zealand has stagnated, and the misguided belief in high levels of demand is now fuelling excessive construction.

Next slide (*old sheep*)

Over the last two days, you have heard a lot about statistics, statutes, rules, regulations, standards etc. Much of what I'm going to talk about is not measurable in graphs, or detectable on plans. I speak from the perspective of a local resident who feels and breathes this land every day of my life. I want to talk about the connection that I, my whānau, and so many people in Nelson have with the recreational areas I have specified, and the value that these places have for us. My concern is that the approval of PPC28 would damage those connections and diminish that value.

My own connection with the Maitai River Valley is not too different from that of many others in our community. I grew up in Auckland but I fell in love with this river over 50 years ago, during a summer holiday with my family staying at the Maitai Campground. This association strengthened from 1985 when I chose to move to Nelson. Almost every day for each of the nearly 40 years that I have lived here, I have walked or cycled beside the river. I

have picnicked there with family and friends, I have orienteered over the hills around the valley, even over the actual farmland proposed for the development. Every summer, my family and I swim in one of the four swimming-holes that are closest to the city. My two daughters grew up in Nelson, went overseas, have recently returned, and now have babies here. The Maitai Valley of their childhood is one of the many reasons they have returned. We are all looking forward to my grandchildren having as long an association with the river as their parents and grandparents have had.

I have lived, worked and travelled elsewhere in Aotearoa and all over the world, and I never take this river for granted: its natural character, the sound of the water, the wildlife it attracts, the birdsong, the lack of development, the lack of traffic, the tranquillity, just the mind-space that being amongst nature provides. When visitors from other parts of our country or the world come to stay, I am proud to show them the valley, the river, the swimming-holes, the green parks and trees. For them, this is extraordinary - to have a beautiful river that you can actually swim in, so close to a city.

And they are right. This river is not just any river; this valley not just any valley; it is unique. I cannot think of another river in this country that flows right through the city centre, and is sufficiently deep, clear and appealing for swimming or kayaking, whose valley offers the space and terrain for running, orienteering and mountain biking, and that has a walk/cycleway running alongside it for as far as 10 kilometres. I disagree with Mr Lile when he likens it to the Stoke river valleys and The Brook. The Maitai Valley involves an entire recreational area, of historical and spiritual value to so many.

I live in Nile St. I chose, many years ago, to live there because of the close access to the numerous walking tracks in the area, as well as the river's swimming opportunities. Because of my choice, and my opposition to the proposed development, I have been accused of nimbyism. I find this term unhelpful and simplistic. It suggests that I, and others like me, are acting out of self-interest. Even just a quick glance at the addresses of those who have gone to the trouble of filing submissions opposing the development shows that most do not live near the river, and some don't even live in Nelson.

Additionally, just a little research into the valley's history reveals its long and strong connection with the people of Nelson, and the pride that they have had in it. The following

photos are from Nelson Photo News, a monthly magazine published in the 1960s. Their captions say almost more than the pictures.

This photo was taken in 1965. The caption reads: “No coverage of the autumn scene would be complete without a picture of the beauty abounding in the Maitai Valley.”

Next slide – (*old cyclist*)

The caption refers to: “the Maitai, autumn beauty spot of Nelson”

Next slide – (*old horses*)

With reference to the River Avon in Christchurch, the caption on this one reads: “Nelson’s ‘River Avon’ is the Maitai, a nobler river by far.”

We are incredibly lucky to have four swimming-holes in the Maitai River so close to the city centre. To many of us locals, they are probably the most precious parts of a precious river.

Next slide (*map*)

I’ve put this up to help identify the locations I’ll talk about. Please forgive me if I’m pointing out what you already know. It shows the river where it runs past the proposed housing area. The river is flowing from right to left. The Maitai Walkway runs alongside the river on its true left bank for approximately 10 kilometres all the way down to the Nelson Marina.

Three of the swimming-holes are circled in red. You can see how close they are to the proposed development. Water from the Kākā Valley catchment area flows through two of those shown, as well as a third further downstream. I cannot see how their water would not be negatively affected by the proposed development, while Sunday Hole, slightly upstream, would inevitably experience increased traffic and noise.

Sunday Hole is at the bottom right of the map. The Waahi Taakaro Reserve which surrounds it provides car parking and access to the swimming-hole. Ralphine Way, the road entrance to and from the proposed development, is just across the Maitai Valley Road from the reserve.

After Sunday Hole, the river runs under Gibbs Bridge, circled in purple. This is a one-way bridge. I am sure you are aware of the proposal that all traffic from the development would cross this bridge on its way to the city centre.

Sunday Hole is also the start of a new cycleway which runs upstream from Gibbs Bridge to the Maitai golf course off to the right of the map.

Just downstream from Sunday Hole is Dennes Hole directly adjacent to the area proposed for 350 houses.

The Maitai Cricket Ground next to it is only separated from this housing area by the river.

Just a little further downstream are Black Hole, Branford Park then Hanby Park, all popular recreation areas for Nelsonians. A fourth swimming-hole, Girlies' Hole, is off the map to the left further downstream within the residential area.

Looking now at some photos:

Next slide – (*Sunday hole*)

Sunday Hole. Very quiet here but enjoyed by so many every day in summer. The reserve to the left has a playground and a grassy area popular with picnickers in summer, but directly across the road from Ralphine Way.

Next slide (*Pauline and Gibbs Bridge*)

This is part of the Maitai Walkway between Sunday Hole and Gibbs Bridge. The only sound here is the rushing water. The fields and hills at the back are the area of the proposed development.

The Nelson City Council recently spent a great deal of money upgrading the existing Maitai Walkway just upstream from here. It provides off-road access for cyclists from Gibbs Bridge, past Sunday Hole and through to a bike hub by the Maitai golf course. The resulting increased traffic congestion from cyclists' cars parked around Gibbs Bridge is already noticeable.

Next slide – (*parked cars*)

This view looks up the valley to Gibbs Bridge. The Maitai Cricket Ground is to the left and the start of the new cycleway on the right just before the bridge. Ralphine Way is to the left across the bridge.

Sporting activities frequently take place at the Cricket Ground and result in parked vehicles overflowing from the car park onto the roadside. In addition, it has to accommodate swimmers' cars in summer who walk across the Cricket Ground to Dennes Hole (which has no road access), and now cyclists' cars also. Mr Spittal concedes that the proposed development would result in more cars on Maitai Valley Road. His vague hope, and I quote, "that people will commute", whatever that means, fails to convince me that traffic congestion would not get far worse should the development proceed.

Next slide – (*Cricket ground*)

The Cricket Ground on a recent Saturday morning. You can see its rural aspect even though the city is only minutes away. This park is used not only by sports teams but also dog owners, walkers, families, picnickers, and people just wanting to sit and enjoy the peace and quiet. It's immediately adjacent to the river and Dennes Hole. The small carpark is a designated free camping spot due to the peaceful green space and its proximity to a swimming-hole, and there are often one or two vans there overnight. This field, however, is directly adjacent to the proposed development. How would it not be negatively affected by noise, air, water, light, and visual pollution?

I now have a video taken from the Maitai Walkway where it runs along the river between the Cricket Ground and Dennes Hole.

Next slide (*video*)

Mr Lile seems to suggest the proposed development would operate in isolation in Kaka Valley, that submitters don't even know where Kākā Valley is, that there are few views of it. Directly through the trees from where I am standing on the walkway, just across what is known locally as the dog swimming-hole, is Kaka Valley, and the proposed site for 350 houses. How would the current serenity and birdsong of this spot not be damaged?

Play video

Next slide – (*Dennes*)

Dennes Hole in winter, another quiet and peaceful spot. Kawau, like the one on a rock on the left, are common. In summer, countless families with young children swim and play here. It is accepted even by the Applicants' experts that the proposed development would affect at least the natural character of this swimming-hole.

Next slide – (*Black Hole*)

Black Hole, downstream a hundred metres. In winter, a haven for Paradise ducks and other bird life; in summer, brimming with teenagers.

Black Hole has long been a popular playground:

Next slide – (*old - boat race*)

Taken 1969, this photo shows the Nelson Jaycees Maitai river races which always attracted a huge crowd.

Next slide – (*Black Hole - Teddy*)

One of my mokopuna tasting the river stones last year at Black Hole. Would I want him doing this with the runoff from cars and roads, contamination from stormwater and accompanying pollutants from this development discharging directly into this river?

Next slide – (*from Cleveland Terrace*)

This is taken from Cleveland Terrace and looks down onto the river and the intersection of Nile Street and Maitai Valley Road. The row of poplars shows the line of the river. The proposed development site is at the centre back and right. This photo clearly shows the urban/rural boundary. The treed hills of the Centre of NZ on the left extend along the valley from the intersection. Yes, there are houses on the right-hand side of the river, built around 50 years ago, but they stop at Hanby Park just around the corner.

Going back to this photo, you can also see this defined edge of urban to rural...

Next slide (*go back to the satellite view*)

The only road into the valley is Maitai Valley Rd at the bottom left. When you turn into it, you are straight into parkland: the beautiful, green of Branford Park, the river holes and

then the Maitai Cricket Ground. Why would previous Councils have established these parks and reserves except to ensure no further loss to the rural nature of the valley?

Next slide (*back to Cleveland Tce view*)

I cannot accept Mr Milne's view that the recreational facilities of Branford Park and the seven houses of Ralphine Way constitute, quote, "elements of a city" so that the gateway to the rural area is at the Ralphine Way turnoff. To me, the start of the Maitai Valley Road is the start of Maitai Valley, the gateway to a valley that is pretty much empty all the way up and over the hills to Pelorus and beyond.

Now, climb the hill on your left and you see...

Next slide – (*from CofNZ*)

...this view from the top of Botanical Hill. Yes, tourists and locals alike do turn away from the view of Tasman Bay behind, to enjoy this outlook onto an outstanding rural landscape, which, together with the mountains affectionately known as The Doubles, creates an outlook iconic to Nelsonians.

The Maitai Valley is a designated significant landscape, but, according to the Applicants, that is irrelevant to PPC28 because Kākā Valley is not so designated. I think this photo shows how the two are inextricably intertwined.

The walk to the top of this hill has always been popular with locals and visitors. I have walked it hundreds of times myself, and on any one morning there are many others doing the same: young, old, dogs, kids, families, overseas visitors, the fit and the not-so-fit. Would we all still enjoy it if the natural character of the land was interrupted by housing and a road behind left and in the Kākā Valley, and the inevitable accompanying traffic and noise? Mr Milne accepts that the tranquillity of this valley would be changed by the proposed development, but he considers that, quote "the change will not compromise the sense of place of Nelson city as a whole". I disagree, and so do at least 13,000 others.

Next slide – (*Stuff article on whenua*)

This whenua burial site is just down a path from the top of the Centre of NZ hill. Designated by the NCC 14 years ago, this spot looks straight onto the area for the proposed development. Surely, it was the peaceful, rural outlook that helped determine the location? Do parents really want this special, spiritual place to vibrate to the sound of bulldozers, be surrounded by houses, and overlook an urban sprawl?

Next slide – *(fence corner)*

I took this photo a couple of weeks ago from the walking track that runs past the whenua burial site. On the right, the whenua burial site. On the left, a part of the proposed development site.

The Maitai and its surrounds have played such a big part in the lives of our community for so long. That they continue to do so speaks to their value. Not everything can stay the same forever. But some things should. Those who support this application may deride those of us who oppose it as being emotional and anti-progress. It seems strange to me that those who want to preserve something good and beneficial for everyone are portrayed, even treated, as problematic.

The benefits of nature on our physical and mental health have been extolled since Greek and Roman times. A vast and ever-increasing amount of research has investigated many aspects of this.

Next slide *(links)*

I have emailed these links:

The last one, a huge review of numerous studies lists some of the many benefits for human health and well-being of seeing and being in rural landscapes, including:

“reduced anxiety, reduced stress, shorter hospital stays, and lower heart rate,”

The reason that Vienna is consistently rated the world’s most liveable city is largely due to the number of public parks and recreation areas, including cycle paths alongside the Danube river. All of these could once have been cut up for housing; instead, they have been preserved for the benefit of all.

When so many other places in the world are seeking to reclaim green areas, it makes no sense to put at risk those we are lucky enough to have. How short-sighted this application must seem to people elsewhere who are struggling to get or regain access to nature, let alone to a beautiful river. I feel very scared by the uncertainty and conjecture abundant in this application: so many “mays”, “maybes” and “where possible” claims. “You may get the odd person coming over the hill” on the new road, said a traffic engineer in his evidence.

This is not just a conveniently-close-to-town river valley that is ok to carve up for housing. The Maitai River runs through the heart of Nelson, and the hearts of many Nelsonians. We must preserve this precious valley for the special recreational opportunities and restorative value it provides. Whether we are involved in this hearing because we are paid to be here, or because we want to benefit in some way from the development, or because we want to preserve the valley for the future, we are all but a blip in the life of this river. In fifty years, most of us will be gone. Please... let our children and grandchildren look back with respect, rather than dismay, at the decision you make on this application.

I will finish with a whakatauki.

Next slide – (*whakatauki*)

Whatungarongaro te tangata; toitū te whenua: People pass away; the land remains.

Thank you for listening.