

Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa

Ko Jacquetta Bell toku ingoa

I have made some changes to my written presentation to address a couple of points made here in the last two days. Also I'm concerned that opposition to the subdivision is being framed as racist, and I don't want to take any risks on with my comments being misinterpreted.

I have lived in Nelson since 1982, for the last 20 years just two minutes' walk from Girlies Hole, the most accessible swimming hole in the Maitai River. One of the grandmas in my whanau attended Nelson College for Girls in the 1920s and could remember competing here in the school swimming sports before the Riverside Pool was built.

I walk or bike on the river banks almost every day. During the covid lock down of 2020 the peace of the Maitai Valley was for me, as for many, my refuge and the saviour of my mental health.

I have been a member of Friends of the Maitai since 2014 when the group was activated in response to 'No Swimming' signs going up at popular swimming spots, due to the presence of toxic algae.

A couple of extra points here: Mr Parsenson on Wednesday stated his confidence the river can flush additional sediment. In fact though the water may run clear after a fresh, sediment has built up in the river floor. Cawthron research says this creates the substrate where toxic algae bloom in warm weather and low flows. Pine harvesting means the river is past its ability to handle the existing sediment load.

Secondly Mr Lile talked about the realignment of Groom Creek – this creek was not shifted for convenience, it was moved back to its original course as part of a wetland restoration.

In my role with Friends of the Maitai I take part in community planting days and in plant care and education.

In the wider community my conservation work includes trapping in the Brook Waimarama Sanctuary and as a member of Birdlife on the Grampians.

I worked on a series of videos for the Nelson City Council on the history of the Maitai Valley. I am privileged to have spoken with older residents and to have recorded the late John Mitchell on the importance of this valley to Tangata Whenua. I also interviewed renowned author Maurice Gee who has set books in the Maitai Valley – he was one of the original members of Friends of the Maitai, and is a strong supporter of Save the Maitai.

I was honoured last year to receive a Queens Service Medal for my work in conservation, the community and the arts.

I would dearly love to acknowledge the respect I hold for the Maitai River in my mihi, but I have been taught at my te reo class that this is a privilege only for Maori.

We would all like to put our trust in the development consortium and its stated aim of respect for te mana o te wai. But no matter which way I look at it or how much I read of the information submitted in support of the Plan Change Request I cannot see that the health of the river is paramount in this application.

The evidence of Roger Young for Friends of the Maitai, the evidence of Tektus Consultants for Save the Maitai, the reservations of the planning consultant Gina Sweetman and the statement from Graeme Ridley on sediment, made on Wednesday, support this view with science, engineering and knowledge of planning regulations.

I know I cannot claim the Maitai as the river of my ancestors. My focus instead is on being a good ancestor to my own moko who are seventh generation New Zealanders. That is why I am here before you today, and I thank you for that opportunity, for your attention, for your knowledge, for your wisdom and for your commitment to doing the right thing.

I'll summarise some of my reasons for opposing PPC28, as detailed in my written submission.

The swimming holes

The Maitai swimming holes are hugely popular in our hot Nelson summers. If 750 houses are built in the rezoned area, the stormwater runoff and pollutants will inevitably make the river less pleasant for swimming, and possibly even un-swimmable.

Even if not a single household tips paint down the drain or washes their car with detergent – the warming effect alone of stormwater coming off houses and roads will affect water quality, as raised in the Cawthron evidence for Friends of the Maitai.

Nelson's green belt

In Nelson we are privileged to have a green and leafy river valley within easy walking distance of the city. This is thanks to the foresight of early town planners, lobbying by citizens as far back as the 19th century, a property deal done in the 1970s with legendary landowner Queenie Richardson, and the generosity of Nelson benefactor Thomas Cawthron.

The rural character, tranquillity and amenity value of this area must not be squandered and must be protected and preserved for the benefit of current and future generations. The plan change proponents say the housing will scarcely be visible, but there will be noise, additional traffic and many other impacts on the peace of the valley.

The Maitai Valley has a vital role of providing quietness and greenspace that is essential for people's health and wellbeing. As we intensify housing in the city this green space will be even more important – it is essential to our health as now recognised by psychologists and the medical profession.

If this plan change is allowed it will be the 'thin end of the wedge' – the quiet tranquillity of the valley will be gone. Housing developments will creep upriver - Orchard Flats are tagged in the 2022 FDS - and if the peace of the valley goes Nelson will have lost a Taonga.

Opportunities for intensification of existing built areas should be encouraged to prevent urban sprawl in green space. The critique of Council's flawed population data, as submitted by Save the Maitai, shows there is sufficient land for housing in the Nelson region without developing the Kākā Valley.

Flood risk & climate change

When I did the video series on the history of the Maitai Valley, retired City Engineer Mac Crampton described how in 1970 Nelson suffered a three day flood that cost two lives, isolated the city, took out four bridges on the Maitai and undermined all of the others.

At the peak of this flood the Maitai was running bank to bank across what's now Branford Park and when forced to narrow at Clouston bridge it formed a second branch, four meters wide, which forged down Nile St, through homes and gardens, down Pitt St and across the Botanic Reserve, going on to flood streets and homes in the Wood.

Even though this flood predates the dam, Mac Crampton assures me the dam would not stop such flooding if the rain was severe over a period of days as it was in 1970. And of course climate change makes such severe weather events more likely – as seen this year in Sydney.

Carbon impact

The development's planned earthmoving, and construction of roads and buildings are not consistent with the decarbonisation pathways required to achieve net zero carbon. There is no detail in the PPCR of the type of housing planned, but the usual style of the developers involved has only the minimum eco-measures required to meet the building code.

Cost to ratepayers

Nelsonians first heard about this development when we read in the Nelson Mail that Council was putting the stormwater upgrade forward as a \$25m post-Covid Shovel Ready project. The consortium is also seeking government Infrastructure Accelerator Funding. Neither of these have been approved, leaving the infrastructure likely to become an unreasonable and inequitable financial cost to the community.

Future protection

If the Plan Change goes ahead, there must be provision for notified Resource Consents at every stage of construction to keep to allow the public to have a say and to protect the river.

The people of Nelson have not been listened to

I am one of over 13,000 people who have signed the petition against the rezoning of Kākā Valley, one of the largest petitions in Nelson's history, and yet one which has been ignored by the Nelson City Council.

Mr Hill – on Wednesday when you introduced the panel as independent commissioners you said at this stage of the plan change ‘the council per se does not have a view’. The Mayor in fact refers to the development as a partnership between council and the consortium.

We are living in a precarious world where the balance between nature and man-made change is at a critical point for the survival of our species.

There is little we can do to make a difference at a global level, but we must do all we can to protect our own back yard.

Commissioners, please reject PPC28 and ensure that the water quality and biodiversity of the Maitai River and the amenity and recreational value of the Maitai Valley and its tranquillity is protected and preserved for future generations.

Thank you.