

Speaking Notes – Supplementary Evidence

Stephen Fuller, Boffa Miskell Limited for Meridian Energy Limited ('Meridian')

Policy 12-7 – Biodiversity, Proposed Horizons One Plan ('the Proposed Plan').

Introduction and Scope of Evidence

1. In Section 1.0 (Introduction) of my evidence, I outline my background and experience. In particular I am a qualified ecologist and member of the Environmental Institute of Australia and New Zealand. I have had experience in the use of criteria for assessing significance, and I have had experience in development of regional policy statements and plan reviews under the RMA (refer Paragraphs 1.1 to 1.8).
2. In Section 2.0 (Scope of Evidence), I explain I have recently been engaged by Meridian to provide supplementary ecological evidence in support of Mr Mat Park, on Schedule E and the criteria contained in Policy 12-7 for assessing significance. I have not to date been party to any of the pre-hearing meetings or caucusing sessions but have peer reviewed the work of Mr Park and am familiar with the issues.
3. In section 2.0 I also note that I approach this issue from the stand point of a practitioner.
4. In undertaking this review, I have drawn on the principal the principal and supplementary evidence of Mr Matiu Park (Senior Ecologists, Boffa Miskell Ltd). The main findings of Mr Parks review, is that the caucusing and prehearing meetings have been constructive and many of Meridians concerns appear to have been resolved; however there remain a few outstanding concerns. Key among these is the issue of sustainability and its role as an assessment criterion. This is the area I will discuss.

Chapter 7 – Biodiversity

5. In Section 3.0 (*refer Paragraphs 3.1 to 3.9*), I discuss the use of "Sustainability" as a criteria for assessing significance and draw on some recent experiences where condition and sustainability have been key considerations for ecological assessments.
6. In note that there are no nationally accepted guidelines for sustainability assessment (*Paragraph 3.1*) and I note that this issue is still being debated by ecologists (*Paragraph 3.2*). Nonetheless I consider that in the RMA context the sustainability has a place in the assessment of significance (*Paragraph 3.3*).

7. I raise the concern that as currently worded Schedule E significance criteria will capture very small sites which, based on my experience are likely to be marginally viable (*Paragraph 3.4*).
8. I provide a recent example of an affects assessment where I have applied sustainability and condition to assessments of significance (*Paragraphs 3.5*), and another example where sustainability was not considered when protecting a site considered to be significant (*Paragraph 3.6*).
9. I raise the concern that the inability to consider condition and sustainability will make it difficult to assess sites under this policy, and for officers to consider ecologists findings.
10. I provide suggesting wording to be appended to Policy 12-7 (*Paragraph 3.9*).

Stephen Fuller
Managing Principal and Ecologist
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