



Ohakune Business Network:

Submission to Horizons Regional Council Re Consent for Kariori Pulp Mill

Re APP – 2006012018.3

And new App – ATH 2010011593.03 and ATH – 202609463.00

To Whom it may concern.

My name is Mike Wiggins, I have lived and owned property and businesses in Ohakune since 1979, I have started 3 very successful businesses in Ohakune, and I am still in partnership with one.

I have been a business consultant in the Taupo /Turangi / Ruapehu region for the last 25 years

I have been an Ohakune Borough Councillor, been president of the Ohakune Promotions Assn, was the founding chairman of Visit Ruapehu and served on that board for 5 years, I am the convener of the Ohakune Business Network which is part of the Ohakune Community Charitable Trust which represents around 80 different Ohakune businesses.

I have seen and experienced many boom-and-bust cycles of the area and believe I have a very good knowledge of what is required to keep the Ohakune / Ruapehu area progressing and growing.

The Ohakune Business Network would like to bring a “different” view to this hearing, a “local” view without all the RMA and other “expert” views.

The demise of the WPI mill and Tangiwai sawmill saw around 240 workers losing their jobs, with many of the workers and their families having to sell up and leave the Ohakune and Reatihi areas to find alternative employment.

The Ruapehu area has been particularly hard hit by unemployment, business downturns and financial hardships.

With the job losses and families leaving the area, transport companies were affected, primary and secondary school roles were affected, real estate figures plummeted as many houses came onto the market, local businesses, the supermarkets, cafes, restaurants, the petrol stations were all affected and the Ruapehu area is still trying to recover.

The economic and wellbeing of the people of the Ruapehu area should also be taken into account when deciding the merit of this application.

It was a breath of fresh air to learn that a new owner may have been found for the WPI mill and that wood pellets that will be made from the plant. That quite a bit of the forestry “slash” wood could be used as well as helping to keep the Huntly Power

Station operating as a crucial supply chain for electricity back up and, as a secondary gain, the cleaning up of forestry off cuts and slash wood will also help clean up flood areas.

With the WPI sale, around 80 people would be employed, 70% of those would probably be from local Iwi, this would have a hugely positive effect in the district. The Tangiwai sawmill may also be back in operation, which will support another 20 people in employment which in turn will support local business opportunities.

As we understand, a 15-year resource consent is already granted for air discharge, and the next step has been to renew an existing 15 year (initially 5 years) resource consent to discharge the 95% treated wastewater into the Whangaehu river with a 23% reduction over time.

As seen through the previous submissions, the treated water is of a better quality, with a PH of 7 neutral, than the actual water in the river which has a "toxic" level of PH -2 to -3.

It is not the treated water discharge that discolours the river water, but the overflow from the crater of Mt Ruapehu, each time there is an overflow, this "toxic" runoff can infect the river for up to 4 years.

There is no fish life 15 k up or 15k down the Whangaehu river, while it may be nice to dream it, the river simply has never been able to, and cannot support fishing, kayaking or swimming.

In researching information regarding the past and new requirements of consent, we understand that it is only treated wastewater (around 95% pure) going into a wetland before being released into a "sulphur" contaminated stream with no fish life there to be affected.

The consent required to put this "95% treated water" into a "toxic" river has now been going on for too long, thousands and thousands of words written, hundreds and hundreds of pages, numerous written reports, 127 pages here, 68 pages there another 40 somewhere else, over 6 panel meetings, expert opinions from everywhere, most who don't even live in the Ruapehu area.

Most submissions agree that there would be "little" or "no" effect on the quality of the water in the Whangaehu river.

As a rural, tourist and domestic attraction, Ohakune has been through poor snow seasons, financial crashes, ski field collapses, the demise of the Chateau, the demise of WPI and Tangiwai Mills, but the area has always been able to bounce back but the loss of jobs and families has been a tough one.

It is very important for the Ohakune and Ruapehu areas, both economically and for employment, that this sale is completed ASAP as it would give the area a much-needed financial boost as an all-year-round employer and domestic destination. The number of conditions attached to this application is quite mind blowing.

That the original application for a simple water discharge has taken so long to process is a travesty to our local community.

The flow on effect in granting this application for Iwi and the community is huge, the jobs created will enable families to reestablish and add to the local economy, the employment opportunities will keep our youth in the area and also provide transport and business opportunities which will continue the growth of the area.

The Ohakune Business Network would like to support the renewing of the consent for the wastewater discharge through the wetland and the consent to construct the wetland as a **MUST** for all the above reasons.

It is noted that Ngati Rangi has asked locals to submit against the proposal. While it is understandable that we all want unpolluted rivers and streams to swim or fish in, the Whangaehu river has never and will probably never, going to be that kind of river.

Ngati Rangi have stated that the pollution is mainly caused by the discharging of the WPI wastewater into the river.

We can understand if the WPI discharge is absolutely the only thing causing the pollution of the river, but this is not your "ordinary" river it is a "toxic" river with @ ph of -2 to -3 acidic (worse than battery acid!) caused by the overflow of sulphur mud and toxins from the Mt Ruapehu Crater lake into the Whangaehu river which causes the toxicity, which in turn lasts years beyond each overflow occurrence.

This ongoing sulphur toxicity does not allow fish life to survive and even to swim in a river that acidic is not advisable.

When each overflow happens, whether small or large (like the Tangiwai disaster) the effects are profound, both on the pollution, colour and toxicity of the river.

The WPI wastewater to be released into the Whangaehu river / stream is around a neutral ph of 7 and is 95% treated water.

So with the above in mind, what are the pros and cons of approving a consent.

#1- Is the community effect, the new mill will employ around 80 locals, that could be 100 families coming to establish in the Ohakune area, add another 20 for the sawmill, that in turn means the supermarket will benefit, the cafes and restaurants will benefit, transport companies will benefit, a huge range of local businesses and suppliers will benefit.

It is estimated that around \$350 million will be brought into the region's economy. The employment effect for Ohakune and the Ruapehu area is huge. Employment options for locals will be increased greatly, especially for our local Iwi who were greatly disadvantaged when WPI closed down. This could mean that locals, local youths and whanau can be employed again instead of having to leave the district.

#2 - Flows on from # 1 in the form of financial gains, not only for businesses, but for the stability for families, the local primary schools and colleges that the financial benefit of regular employment brings.

#3 – The national benefit of having a power supply that comes from using a sustainable process that comes from pellet production using waste “slash” wood that is causing problems around New Zealand

The above 3 points, along with the main points in the submission from the Ohakune Business Network and the granting of this consent along with the already granted clean air consent, will give assurance of operation to any potential purchaser of the WPI plant and is an absolute must for the betterment of the region.

Mike Wiggins,

Convener,

Ohakune Business Network