

**BEFORE THE WHANGĀREI DISTRICT COUNCIL AND NORTHLAND REGIONAL  
COUNCIL**

**IN THE MATTER** of the Resource Management Act 1991 (“RMA”)

**AND**

**IN THE MATTER** of a resource consent application by Northport  
Limited under section 88 of the RMA for a port  
expansion project at Marsden Point

**APPLICATION NO.** APP.040976.01.01  
LU 2200107

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**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF MURRAY ERNEST JAGGER  
(NORTHPORT – CORPORATE OVERVIEW)**

**24 August 2023**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Qualifications and experience**

1. My name is Murray Ernest Jagger. I am the Chairman of the Board of Directors for Northport Limited (“Northport”). I have been in this role since February 2018.
2. I am also Chairman of Marsden Maritime Holdings Limited, a 50 percent shareholder of Northport, and North Tugz, a joint venture with Ports of Auckland Ltd of which Northport is a 50 percent shareholder.
3. I whakapapa back to the original Nova Scotian families who settled this area in the 1850s. My family was running commercial vessels on Whangārei Harbour as far back as the early 1900s.
4. I run a large dairy and beef operation on our 550-hectare family farm at Whangārei Heads, I have served with the local fire service for 38 years, I chaired a number of community organisations and, until recently, I was a director of New Zealand’s largest dairy genetics cooperative, Livestock Improvement Corporation (LIC). I was also President of the Whangārei Agricultural and Pastoral Society.
5. I therefore have deep ties to the area, and I am committed to ensuring that any change planned for Northport is of benefit to, appropriate for, and addresses the sensitivities and concerns of all parts of the community.
6. I am authorised to present this evidence on behalf of Northport.

### **Involvement with the Project**

7. I have been involved with Northport’s Vision for Growth project (“the Project”) as a member of the Marsden Maritime Holdings and Northport Boards since 2015. Due to the Project’s importance to Northport, and the Northland region, I have stayed abreast of the Project’s development, including remaining involved through refinement of the Project, lodgement of resource consent applications, and with consultation.
8. My involvement in the Project has been primarily in a governance capacity but has included attendance at:
  - (a) internal strategic discussions and workshops;
  - (b) external consultation events, including public information days;

- (c) expert information sessions; and
- (d) meetings / hui with mana whenua representatives.

## **SCOPE OF EVIDENCE**

9. In my evidence, I:
- (a) refer to the national discussion around the future of Ports of Auckland, with a view to clarifying for the record Northport's position within that discussion;
  - (b) outline the track record of investment in, and growth at, Northport;
  - (c) provide an overview of the rationale behind our Vision for Growth;
  - (d) summarise my personal perspective and motivations when it comes to Northport's environmental stewardship and community involvement;
  - (e) describe Northport's philosophy behind its approach to community consultation, including with mana whenua;
  - (f) briefly state Northport's future objectives; and
  - (g) set out my conclusions.

## **NORTHPORT AND PORTS OF AUCKLAND – THE NATIONAL CONVERSATION**

10. I wish to address briefly the matter of the future of Ports of Auckland Limited ("POAL"). I acknowledge that there is some uncertainty, and considerable discussion in the public domain regarding the future (medium- to long-term) operations of POAL and the potential effects on operations at Northport. I wish to take this opportunity to make it clear that the future operation of POAL has only limited bearing on Northport's strategic objectives or future planning.
11. Importantly, this resource consent application covers the full extent of Northport's freight-handling and logistics ambition. The Board does not see a future where Northport replaces, or becomes, Auckland's primary port. Instead, we see Northport playing an important role in supporting Auckland's ultimate freight and logistics strategy – whatever this turns out to be.

12. We see Northport's role as an integral part of a resilient and geographically astute upper North Island supply chain strategy that uses the capabilities of all three of the region's ports: POAL, Port of Tauranga and Northport.
13. The development of port infrastructure in this country tends to take many decades. Therefore, it is essential that planning for future infrastructure is undertaken early, including securing resource consents. In order to properly undertake this long-term planning and make strategic decisions regarding Northport's future, the Board must have the certainty of the necessary resource consents to enable infrastructural growth. This will ensure that Northport is able to deliver this important piece of New Zealand infrastructure in a way that meets the needs of the Upper North Island's transport and logistics sectors well into the future.

## **INVESTING IN GROWTH**

14. Port operations in Whangārei Harbour have been key to the development of Northland's economy for over a century. Originally the town basin enabled exports of primary sector resources. Then, from the 1920s, Port Whangārei catered for fertiliser products, dairy products, horticulture, and forestry.
15. Over time it became increasingly difficult to maintain the channel and berth depths required for cargo vessels in the upper harbour. In the late 1960s,<sup>1</sup> the Northland Harbour Board identified the deep-water site at the entrance to Whangārei Harbour as ideal for a national container terminal facility. This is due to a range of physical, nautical, financial and social advantages. Construction of the Northport facility proceeded in an iterative manner, expanding and developing over time to meet changing demands.<sup>2</sup> This approach enabled Northport to make design responses to evolving demand, and other external factors. Visionary thinking is central to the Northport story. Our facility has proved to be an effective gateway to the world for not just Northland, but the upper North Island as a whole. This Project represents the continuation of the strategy first envisioned in the 1960s.

### **Recent investment**

16. Northport constantly strives to increase its efficiency, reliability, and safety. The company has a solid track record of investing in infrastructure and improving its handling capacity

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<sup>1</sup> Following a study to determine whether cargo between the UK and NZ could be economically carried in containers.

<sup>2</sup> For a comprehensive discussion of the history of Northport, refer to section 4 of Northport's 'Issues and Options Report', October 2022, forming Appendix 2 to the AEE.

to meet the changing needs of not only importers and exporters, but also of the global shipping industry. Mr Moore provides further details of this investment in his evidence.

17. I wish to reinforce that the Northport Board actively supports development necessary to enable the port's infrastructure to meet first Northland's, and now the Upper North Island's, evolving freight needs. In particular, the transition from an almost exclusive focus on general freight and bulk cargo to an environment where containerisation is, if not already predominant, then well on its way to becoming so.

## **OUR VISION FOR GROWTH**

18. The Northport Board has considered carefully the need for expansion. We have considered a range of possible future scenarios, each backed by a considerable body of work undertaken over the course of several decades by the company and other parties. Each of these scenarios indicate that port congestion, particularly in the Upper North Island (but also nationally), will become an ever-more significant problem in the coming decades.
19. We have today an opportunity to put the building blocks in place to address this long-term issue. Put simply, this Project seeks to use this country's only naturally deep-water port to help ease congestion and enhance levels of resilience in the national supply chain.

## **ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY**

### **Environment**

20. Environmental stewardship is a matter the Northport Board takes extremely seriously. Northport is the only New Zealand port that has been constructed entirely under the RMA and, as a result, is designed to meet very stringent environmental controls.
21. As someone whose family have lived, worked and played on Whangārei Harbour for generations, I am pleased to be in a position where I can have some influence and oversight on the effectiveness of Northport's environmental controls, something I am very passionate about.
22. When my family first arrived at Whangārei Heads several generations ago, nearly all trade, commerce and point-to-point travel was by water. There was a far greater number of vessels plying their trade - albeit there was much less regulation at that time.

23. Greater, more effective regulation continues to deliver benefits. I believe I have witnessed an improvement in the health of the harbour over the course of my lifetime. The biodiversity of the harbour and the clarity of the water are considered great assets. Northport is committed to minimising adverse effects on the environment. In pursuit of continuous environmental improvement, Northport is similarly committed to protecting and enhancing the natural surroundings in which it operates.
24. In his evidence, Mr Moore comments on how Northport's operations are managed to avoid, remedy or mitigate adverse environmental effects and details examples of Northport's pro-active approach to environmental management. That approach has been informed by the breadth and depth of the expert assessments underpinning this application.

### **Community**

25. I live immediately across the harbour from the port and my local community tends to hold me personally to account for everything that happens at the port. This is not an issue I can go home and forget about; it's front and centre of my world.
26. I consider change at Marsden Point is inevitable. However, I also consider that it can be managed to ensure an overall positive outcome for the local communities – from which many dozens of members have submitted in favour of the Project – and for the region.
27. Accordingly, I take great pleasure in the fact that people in my community who look across the water at the port know that there's someone there with deep ties to the community, who is in a position to ensure that any change works for the benefit of our part of the world. As Board Chair, I have instilled this focus into all aspects of operations.

### **COMMUNITY CONSULTATION**

28. Northport is a significant, long-term piece of national infrastructure that is now part of the social and economic fabric of our communities. It is also a generational piece of infrastructure – the positive social and economic impact of this facility has already been felt over at least two generations of Northlanders and this effect will continue for many, many years into the future. Northport understands well that with this impact comes a need for integration with our communities.
29. We cannot and do not stand apart from these communities. Northport is committed to contributing to the economic, environmental, and social sustainability of our local community. It looks to develop mutual partnerships where we can learn from each other

through dialogue; and the sharing of knowledge, expertise, and labour. Northport has formed strong relationships with local government, iwi, community, business, and conservation groups.

30. It is for this reason that when the Northport Board was considering the various consent processes available for this Project, we consciously and deliberately selected the process that would ensure the greatest degree of community involvement and participation. The Board, and the Northport management team, are firm in their conviction that we absolutely have to bring the community with us in this process.
31. The Board and Northport's management team have been engaging with the community proactively about our Vision for Growth across multiple channels since late 2017. Mr Blomfield provides further information about this process, and outcomes, in his evidence.

#### *Mana whenua*

32. Further to the above, the guidance, input and views of mana whenua are and will remain crucial when it comes to the decisions Northport makes about its operations and its future capabilities.
33. I understand that Mr Blomfield and Mr Isaacs provide in their evidence further details of the close consultation on the Project with representatives of Patuharakeke, Ngatiwai, Te Parawhau and other iwi and hapu. To preface that evidence, I record that I have personally been involved in several meetings and hui regarding the Project. I wish to reinforce that Northport greatly values the relationships that exist with mana whenua and has approached the Project with the clear direction to bring mana whenua on the journey with us from its inception. I consider it essential for the maintenance and development of those relationships that we share information freely and discuss any issues that arise in order that we can resolve, or move past, them.
34. In that respect, through this Project, Northport has been in discussions with mana whenua about further developing the respective existing relationships based on trust, mutual recognition, and ongoing consultation. It is my sincere hope that these relationships are strengthened and, where appropriate, formalised.

#### **NORTHPORT'S OBJECTIVES FOR THE FUTURE**

35. I believe strongly that, first and foremost, this Project presents New Zealand with a rare opportunity to develop, and enhance the resilience of, its national supply chain infrastructure.

36. It also represents a necessary and positive step in the development of infrastructure that the Northport Board believes will become essential to the effective economic development of the Upper North Island.
37. The Board believes that the Project will deliver significant social and economic benefits not only for Northland, but also for North Auckland.

## **CONCLUSION**

38. Northport plays a critical role in the Northland region and forms an important part of national port infrastructure.
39. The Board is highly aware of Northport's community and environmental responsibilities and takes these responsibilities very seriously. Engagement on the Project, including cultural engagement, is therefore very important to Northport. Hence, I have personally taken an active role in this process.
40. The Project aligns with Northport's future objectives. Northport has a history of incremental expansion, and this Project represents an important next stage in its development. It is necessary, timely and appropriate to continue to enable Northport to provide its essential infrastructure role.
41. Accordingly, the Board has committed to seeking the necessary resource consents to enable the Project to assist Northport to remain current, capable and efficient - and to continue to provide accessible, resilient, and cost-effective port infrastructure into the future.

**Murray Jagger**  
Chairman, Northport Limited

24 August 2023