

**BEFORE INDEPENDENT HEARING COMMISSIONERS  
AT WHANGĀREI**

**I MUA NGĀ KAIKŌMIHANA WHAKAWĀ MOTUHAKE  
KI WHANGĀREI**

**IN THE MATTER  
AND**

**of the Resource Management Act 1991**

**IN THE MATTER**

**of the hearing of submissions on applications by the  
Northport Ltd – Port Expansion project at Marsden  
Point**

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**SUMMARY STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF DR RICHARD BULMER  
ON BEHALF OF PATUHARAKEKE TE IWĪ TRUST BOARD**

**MARINE ECOLOGY**

**30 OCTOBER 2023**

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1 My full name is Dr Richard Bulmer. I have qualifications and experience as set out in my Evidence in Chief (“**EiC**”) dated 18<sup>th</sup> of September 2023. As per my EiC, I confirm that I have read the Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses, contained in the Environment Court Practice Note 2023 and I agree to comply with it.

1.2 The purpose of this statement is to briefly summarise the key points from my EiC.

## **2. SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE**

2.1 I have reviewed the Assessment of Marine Ecological Effects (AMEE) and the subsequent marine ecology evidence and contributed to the joint witness statement. I agree with elements of the AMEE, including that Whangārei harbour and the proposed port development sustain very high benthic biodiversity and ecological values, which is under stress by a range of impacts including coastal development, sedimentation, dredging, and fishing and the impacts on benthic biodiversity are likely to be moderate to high. However, there are two key aspects where I disagree with the AMEE, one relates to the impact on shellfish and the other relates to the assessment of cumulative effects and the identification of upside risk to ecology.

2.2 I disagree that the effects on shellfish are likely to be low. Instead, in agreement with Dr Lohrer, it is my opinion that the impacts on shellfish are most likely to be moderate due to the potential impact of the port development on ecological connectivity and cumulative stressor impacts. I note that pipi and scallops are highly vulnerable to additional stress and are currently under rahui and fishing closures in an attempt to restore and prevent further degradation to these important species.

2.3 It is also my opinion that there is upside risk to the Assessment of Marine Ecological Effects, with the potential for the impacts to be higher than assessed by experts, for the following reasons:

- (a) The first reason relates to the hydrodynamic modelling. Prof Bryan has raised questions in regard to the modelling. If the modelling predictions are out, there are potential impacts on the ecology that may not have been adequately assessed and therefore the impacts could be worse than predicted, this risk hasn't been accounted for.
- (b) The second reason relates to the position and size of the proposed development and uncertainty regarding the impact on ecological connectivity and cumulative stressor interactions.

Overall, consents have been obtained (or are sought by Northport) for around 70 ha of dredging and reclamation. In addition, Channel Infrastructure have also gained consent to dredge around 144 ha from the approach and entrance channel to Whangārei Harbour. Collectively, this equates to over 210 ha of area being potentially impacted, and in areas directly impacts approximately ~50% of the width of the channel. This area is a primary conduit for ecology moving into and out of the harbour, plus contains very high biodiversity values. This means that developments in this zone may have disproportionate impacts on ecological connectivity throughout the harbour, compared to developments in other locations (such as the middle or upper arms of the harbour), and these outcomes are highly uncertain.

- 2.4 From a management mitigation strategy, the dredge management proposals (phasing the consents and using real time monitoring) and potential reseeded for shellfish could help to mitigate impacts to some degree. However, the risks for upside adverse effects will still exist and need to be considered as part of the decision-making process against the many other factors under consideration.

Dr Richard Bulmer

**31 October 2023**