

## SUBMISSION BY CAROL AND JEFF WAGENER

31 AUGUST 2020

Good afternoon members of the Panel. My name is Carol Wagener. My family have been living in Pukenui for four generations.

In March 2018 a hearing was held for resource consent applications for Motutangi-Waiharara Water Users Group. 17 Applicants applied to pump up to two million cubic meters a year from the Aupouri aquifer. The scale and the ramifications of this proposal concerns many of us, but only bore owners were given the opportunity to speak or attend the hearing.

I personally felt at the time decisions made by NRC were based largely on financial and profiteering, instead of proper regard to the environment, the Aquifer and local residents, which is a mandate placed on NRC by local ratepayers.

February 2019 the Environment Court found there should be an adaptive management plan, in which the water take should be in staged quantities over nine years, of 25, 50, 80 and 100 percent of the amounts applied for, to an eventual total of about two million cubic meters per year. If at any stage the aquifer were to show distress, the staged amount should reduce to the previously staged amount, and if the distress persisted, consent could be withdrawn.

In the same month, a further 24 applicants to NRC were made requesting a further six million cubic meters per year, more than twelve times the originally permitted draw-down in the first year and NRC state the environmental impact would be no more than minor, although it could adversely affect shallow bores. We submit that there are insufficient data points to reach this conclusion. The effects are simply not known.

We submit that NRC should enforce the Environment Court decision and not allow more applicants until the nine year monitoring has finished.

In October 2019 NRC decided to inform the community with a deadline for submissions. It took them seven months to inform the community involved and allowed them a scant 30 days to get submissions in. Bore owners only, yet again despite the Environmental Court stating everybody is potentially affected.

We all know about the original groundwater assessments and modelling based on survey data from the late 1980 and 90's, which was found to be incorrect historical data. I am relieved to see this has been recognised, but it potentially means the allocation limit needs to be reviewed. Houhora is a drought sensitive area and climate change is another matter which could well affect the aquifer, which in the words of one authority is "shallow and fragile" with practically no knowledge of the extent of the aquifer beyond the eastern shoreline.

Ali McHugh from NRC stated 24<sup>th</sup> February 2020 water in dozens of small coastal settlements in Northland could soon become too salty to drink due to drought. More than two dozen aquifers were nearing or quickly heading towards their lowest levels on record due to the unrelenting drought.

The same concerns remain from the first hearing and now NRC seem to be intent on adding another 24 applicants.

In summary our concerns are:-

Saltwater intrusion.

Domestic bores running dry.

Lack of trust that water will be available for our community in the future.

Lack of trust that commercial bore users will abide by the conditions of their consents. At the last hearing it was noted five bore users were detected exceeding their permitted takes by large margins.

Will the commercial applicants be paying for the cost involved in monitoring as they are the cause of the risk?

How will the monitoring result be made available to the public?

How many more applicants does NRC have/intend to allow?

Contamination of waterways and ground water from chemicals.

Some people have lived in this community for many many years and have shallow bores. There will be no liability on the applicants if/when their bores collapse. Why do you expect them to replace their bore or install water tanks at a huge cost, when it's a decision you have made?

We love living in Pukenui and do understand that change is bound to happen, but we are still lucky enough to class our community as paradise.

Water is life, now and forever. Please members of the panel let's follow the environmental court decision to have an adaptive management plan in place permanently in order to conserve the aquifer for centuries rather than decades. It is in all of our best interests and will future proof our resources for private and commercial use alike.