

**BEFORE THE COMMISSION
APPOINTED BY THE OTAGO REGIONAL COUNCIL**

UNDER	the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA)
IN THE MATTER	Of an application by Dunedin City Council for resource consent being processed with reference RM20.280
BY	ŌTOKIA CREEK AND MARSH HABITAT TRUST Submitter

STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF LOVEDAY WHY

DATED 6 MAY 2022



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STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF LOVEDAY WHY

Introduction

1. My name is Loveday Why. I am a home-schooling mother and I live on the banks of Ōtokia Creek with my husband, Kris, and two young children, Sol and Avalon.
2. As a member of the Ōtokia Creek and Marsh Habitat Trust, I am authorised by the Trust to provide this evidence on its behalf.

Scope and Structure of Evidence

3. My evidence will address the following matters:
 - (a) The significance of the Ōtokia Creek and environs to our family
 - (b) The emotional and mental wellbeing benefits provided to the community and visitors by engagement with Ōtokia Creek
 - (c) The impact on the wellbeing of children if contaminants discharge to Ōtokia Creek
 - (d) The voices of the children: some words of support from children who love playing in Ōtokia Creek and on Brighton beach.

Ōtokia Creek and Environs

4. My husband, Kris, grew up in Green Island and spent his childhood and youth cycling to Brighton with a surfboard under his arm to meet friends and enjoy the waves. After traveling for many years, he found his way back to his beloved Brighton, with me in tow. We were lucky enough to secure a plot of land which slopes gently down to the banks of Ōtokia Creek, at the beach end. We cleared the property of gorse and have planted a garden of natives and edibles. It is now a special haven, full of native birdsong and with easy access to the beautiful waters of Ōtokia where we spend most of our time as a family.
5. During the Summer our weekends are spent swimming in the creek, playing with friends in the pools where the creek exits out onto the beach towards the ocean, kayaking further up-creek, and sharing kai with friends on the creek bank at the end of our garden. In the Winter, we take nature walks along the creek and plant native trees and

shrubs along its edge with the Ōtokia Trust, building on the many years of work that Kris has put in as a solo tree-planter and via plant days he has run through his native tree-planting and care business: Wildwood Ecoforestry.

6. These tree-planting efforts have involved our wider family - for example, the striking ti kouka (cabbage tree) you see on the left side of Barney's Rock was "planted" by our nephew when he was less than a year old. The wider community have also joined us in planting efforts, sometimes planting a tree to commemorate a loved one or a special occasion. The joy these families feel as they care for the waters that are so close to their hearts is evident.



Photo of a grandmother and granddaughter planting native trees at Ōtokia Creek and Marsh Habitat Trust's Community Plant Day, 2022.

Emotional and Mental Wellbeing

7. It is well-known that being by water lifts the spirits, calms the mind and offers an expanded perspective on our personal experience. I have spent countless hours swimming in Ōtokia Creek and the ocean at Brighton, sitting beside it in thought or prayer, and guiding my children to have the same kind of respect and love for this magnificent and ever-changing space of beauty and nourishment.
8. Before home-schooling I ran a business, part of which comprised holding emotional wellbeing courses online and in our property. In these circles, connection to water was always a vital part of the work in order to soothe the mind of worries and clear the emotions. The students came from all over the world and many still write to me with memories of the waters of Ōtokia and the tui, bellbird and native duck song in the background of our recordings. Those who came in person equally hold a special place for Ōtokia in their hearts.
9. Immersion in water has extraordinary health benefits and we are blessed by cold water most of the year at Ōtokia. I cannot imagine a life without swimming with my family and friends in the creek, enjoying each other and nature, and feeling free of anxieties and pressure. Possible contaminants pouring past our garden and preventing these simple profound pleasures, let alone the desecration of the water space as an entity itself, is too horrible to contemplate.
10. Leachate in this environment would massively negatively affect the emotional and mental wellbeing of every family in Brighton, and the hundreds of visitors who pour into the township every sunny day, looking for simple pure fun and family togetherness in a cultural era in which that is increasingly hard to come by.



Photo of Loveday Why and her daughters at Brighton Beach where Ōtokia Creek meets the ocean, 2021.

Impact of Leachate on Children

11. Others have discussed the chemical aspects and detrimental health effects of contaminants in Ōtokia Creek. I want to draw attention to the negative impacts on the happiness and wellbeing of local children if they were unable to play near or swim within the creek.
12. Outdoor swimming has unique benefits which help children to develop other skills more quickly - physical and mental / academic. Wild swimming reduces mental stress and allows children to develop physical agility, confidence and strength, in a way that is not quite the same as pool swimming. The wonder of a child is awakened by wild swimming and a lifelong connection to nature is forged.
13. As well as the individual families who love to spend time at Ōtokia, the preschool at Brighton makes extensive positive use of the creek and beach and has this to say:

“I and our Kaiako are totally against the Smooth Hill landfill. We use

the beach every day as part of our learning nature programme.” Karen McCauley, Director at Little Rock Preschool, Brighton.

14. Allowing our children to form deep connections with the water and surrounds through swimming, playing, observing nature and simply being alongside it will set up the conditions for them to be stewards of the creek in an ongoing way. Over time, they will pass on their love, care and dedication to the creek to their own children.
15. Alternatively, if the landfill goes ahead, the countless hours, months, years of labour carried out by the Ōtokia Trust and individuals who deeply care for and love this creek will be reversed. The enjoyment and positive mental, emotional and physical development of children will be halted.



Photo of my daughter, Sol, swimming in Ōtokia Creek, 2021.

16. I do not want to have these moments consigned to precious memories and denied to the children of future generations:

- (a) Lazy hot summer days watching the dragonflies hover over the water at our eye level as we swim and roll, splash and play through the water of the creek;
 - (b) sliding our kayak from the garden edge into the creek at sunset to watch the birds on the marshland in the apricot Autumn light;
 - (c) Kris pushing the girls onto waves on the bodyboard while I stand knee deep in the sparkling waters wondering how I got so lucky to be here;
 - (d) paddling on surfboards down creek to the beach where families throng in the clear warm water, children jump off rocks, babies are bathed in the shallows, a pregnant mother relaxes and smiles into the distance, while squeals and shrieks of delight carry across the water. Days that seem to last forever.
17. If the landfill goes ahead all of this will be lost and the local community as well as the inhabitants of wider Dunedin who also love this precious taonga will be heartbroken.

Voices of the Children

18. I asked some children what Ōtokia Creek means to them.

"I go in it on my surfboard, and I feel lovely." Avalon, aged three.

"We love to splash in the water and jump in the waves." Maddie and Paige, aged four and two.

"We like watching daddy surf." Matthias, aged three, and Hehale, aged one.

"I love the creatures in the rock pools." Rowan aged four.

"I like collecting shells and seaweed." Maddie, aged four.

"We love to run and jump off the rocks onto the sand," Ollie, Jasper, Alex and Lewis, aged three and four.

"I like playing and sitting in the water." Harper aged four *"I like to explore and swim in the creek because it is warm. I like to skim on my body board."* Libby aged eleven.

"I love digging holes and trenches to the water. I love exploring for fish and swimming in the creek without the waves." Dion aged five.

"I love to play at the beach every day!" Kendrick aged three.

"I love all of the beach sooooo much!" Penny, aged four

"It sings to me." Sol aged six.

And finally from Zoe Armstrong, a parent of nine-month-old Kaylee:

"This landfill could take away our children's chance to believe that they can make a difference. Our school lets children explore the local beach and wildlife every week to learn about our land and the effect we have on our ecosystem. I love our preschool beach program. It makes our local school so unique and gives our children the opportunity to learn and explore their whenua takutai and see how life grows around them. Our children have a strong connection with their environment because they are constantly seeing the effect rubbish and run-off causes to our beloved sea creatures and beach life and they desperately want to save it. The idea that they have to watch the place they love be destroyed by human wastefulness and toxicity would be absolutely heart-breaking. This is exactly what we are raising the next generation to avoid, and this sort of build could crush the hopes of these children before they have even had a chance to enact their own change on the world. I don't want to see my little girl grow up to watch her favourite place become uninhabitable or for her to miss out on exploring our beach like the tamariki before her. The landfill is a poisonous wound to inflict on the heart of our tight-knit community."

Loveday Why

On behalf of the Ōtokia Creek and Marsh Habitat Trust

6 May 2022