

OTAGO REGIONAL POLICY STATEMENT – EVIDENCE OF LOGAN WALLACE – SUMMARY

1. My updated evidence discusses the freshwater visions process as it relates to the Pomahaka Catchment Group, located in the Lower Clutha rohe.
2. Back in November 2020 I went along to the afternoon/evening consultation on the freshwater visions at Tapanui, which is part of the Clutha Mata-Au FMU – Lower Clutha rohe.
3. Other members of the community and farmers attended from our district. We discussed the importance of a thriving rural community and the importance of agriculture before council staff arrived. Despite every person acknowledging the importance of thriving agriculture – none of those words were included in the visions that were released.
4. We want thriving rural communities and to achieve that we need thriving agriculture. The visions that have resulted from this consultation do not reflect what our thoughts were.
5. We are part of the lower Pomahaka (one of the ‘problem’ catchments) which has been highly modified historically. They are now almost all mechanically straightened waterways with an impervious clay bottom.
6. The Visions for lower Clutha state that “opportunities to restore the natural form and function of water bodies are promoted wherever possible”. Although the work that our catchment group is doing is focused on long term improvement of water quality, I’m not sure that we would be able to return those water bodies to their natural form and function. The modified waterways have created ongoing issues with bank slumping and high sediment load. There is a build up of large amounts of sediment because of the exposed clay base.
7. These waterways were traditionally cleaned every few years to keep water flowing. This was what was viewed as best farming practice at the time but is now a discretionary activity. But you would be highly unlikely to get a consent because it is work in a waterway.
8. The process to improve water quality takes time. The issues we must deal with include turbidity and DRP levels. This will not improve quickly unless we have some sort of intervention. We need access to rules to enable us to use some of the tools at our disposal (e.g. sediment traps for our modified waterways) to speed up the natural process (natural sediment removal). Other approaches are river specific but could include gravel removal.
9. Historic sediment is impacting and increasing the water levels in the waterways and creating negative outcomes. There are not any proposed tools to respond to this as we are not permitted to do any work in a flowing waterway, and the small flowing modified waterways are where our problems are. Tools enabling intervention must be allowed to improve water quality outcomes.
10. It is hard for us to have to deal with historic sediment issues but also potentially have unrealistic measures of water quality – that is, our creek is never going to be at a pure crystal clear level for Turbidity, based on the nature of the water body and the surrounding environment. It is an unrealistic standard. The described baselines will not work for all waterways because the waterways themselves are all different - due to their location and where their main water source is (geology, soil type etc).
11. Pomahaka Catchment group started with ORC Plan Change 6A. In the absence of guidance for what we could do to meet the new Plan rules, a lot of local farmers got together to work on how to meet rules. The Catchment Group allowed farmers to collect data themselves and figure out where the issues were and create solutions in response.
12. Farming best management practice is now all about improving water quality – and looking at all the impacts, not just about improving production, but looking at the whole environment, including the wider community. Our catchment visions for water quality are interrelated to

the catchment groups and the work that they do. This is not a short-term game, and the risk of getting it wrong impacts all of us. External visions and rules mean less engagement and buy in from a local level, less participation in the local catchment group, meaning less sharing of ideas and innovations that are improving water quality at a local level. The bigger picture risk of getting it wrong is that we do not have a profitable primary industry and we are not supporting the rural sector. That impacts the social framework of the rural communities.

13. Since Plan Change 6A the catchment group has worked hard collectively to record, measure and make positive changes in freshwater management practices.
14. Our catchment visions and goals are more reflective of our local needs than what is prescribed by Government.