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| Before the Independent Commissioners |  |
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| Under | the Resource Management Act 1991 |
| In the matter of | a hearing on submissions on the proposed Te Tai o Poutini Plan  Hearing Topics 1 and 2  **Submitter Birchfields Ross Mining Limited (S604)** |

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| Statement of Evidence of Mark Birchfield |
| 2 October 2023 |
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**Introduction**

1. My name is Mark Birchfield.
2. I am Mine Manager at Southside and have held that position since 2010. I have authority to give evidence on behalf of Birchfield’s Ross Mining Limited (BRM). I am also a son of the Directors of BRM, which is family business, So I can speak on behalf of the family.
3. My previous work experience includes 35 years of mining and related businesses predominantly with BRM.

**Company overview**

1. Birchfield’s Ross Mining have been operating in Ross and the surrounding areas for the past 30 years or more. Initially their mining activities focused on the “Ross pit” area at the top of town. This operation developed into one of the largest alluvial gold mines in the South Island and contributed significantly to the Ross and wider West Coast economy.
2. Currently mining is undertaken in the Ross area within land owned by Birchfield’s Ross Mining and a neighbouring permit in Ross and at Southside near Hokitika. The southside operation also includes aggregate processing and supply to the public and local contractors. Both the Southside operation and the Ross operation on MP 41702 include rare earth element exploration studies for ilmenite, garnet, and zircon which the company has commenced.
3. Birchfield’s Ross Mining has interests in the following permits,

* MP 41702 (Ross)
* MP 53355 (Mikonui)
* MP 41364 (Ross Beach)
* MP 41354 (Southside Hokitika)
* EPA 61024.01

And has mined within the following permits near Ross

* MP 50125
* MP 41784
* MP 41977
* ML 323273

And Birchfield’s Ross Mining also owns land within MP 53078 in the Mikonui River Valley which is one of the largest remaining alluvial gold fields in New Zealand.

1. In the height of mining operations BRM employed 30 employees on site and currently the company has 17 employees. They are spread between the two mining operations and workshop located at Ross which services the mining fleet as well as other mining operations and the local farming community.
2. BRM has mainly worked as a mining contractor to permit holders within the district where mining works are undertaken on behalf of the permit holders and a percentage of the gold is paid back to the permit holder. Rehabilitation of these mining areas sees the development of pasture land, weed and predator control and other benefits to landowners.
3. Rehabilitation of the area at the Ross Lake has seen the redevelopments of the Ross rugby ground, the construction of changing rooms and ablution facilities.
4. BRM is the major employer in Ross and also employs people from Hokitika and Hari Hari. The contribution to the local community is significant through these employment opportunities, with highly skilled machine operators able to remain in the district for work. Employment in the community provides benefit to the local preschool, school and retailers.
5. BRM uses a number of local service providers and contractors to support its mining operations. Conservative estimates have put BRM’s contribution to the local economy at over $200 million in the time that they have been operating in Ross. Continuation of mining allows for continued employment opportunities and investment in the district by BRM.
6. BRM actively supports local community groups including junior and senior sports teams. Like other mining companies BRM has machinery, equipment and expertise for its operations that is also invaluable and heavily relied on for flood response and emergency repair of community infrastructure.
7. This was evident in the response to the Franz Josef and Fox floods where BRM equipment was mobilised to repair and protect the old landfill that was damaged in that event and also reinstate access roads to the glaciers.
8. BRM supports the TTPP mining strategic directions recognising the importance of mining and providing a consenting pathway. The strategic directions enable mineral extraction; recognise that mineral resources are fixed in location; and enable mineral extraction activities in a range of locations (as long as adverse environmental effects can be appropriately managed).

**The West Coast's connection with mining**

1. As I have highlighted, BRM's mining activities significantly contribute to the West Coast economy and to Ross and the surrounding community. BRM's activities have been part of the Ross community's history and will form part of its future.
2. Alluvial gold and the other mineral resources that BRM targets are only found in certain locations due to the geological processes required to create the minerals. That is why BRM's operations are often mining contract services to individual landowners as the mineral resource is found on a range of land typologies.
3. BRM continues to operate out of Ross and plans to continue providing contract mining services as well as mining our own lands. We will continue to be involved in our community and provide skilled jobs to the district.

**Mining activity**

1. BRM's mining activities require more than just the extraction of ore. The creation of access roads, storage and mechanics areas, staff facilities and water management areas are all critical to successful mining.
2. Additionally, BRM considers the post-mining rehabilitation phase as an important part of our role as miners. Ecological benefits in the form of weed control, stock fencing and land redevelopment flow from a successful mining enterprise.

**Conclusion**

1. Mining is an important activity for the West Coast and it is necessary to recognise the role mineral extraction plays through the strategic directions of the TTPP. This enabling approach reflects the economic, social and ecological benefits of appropriate and well-managed mining operations.

**Mark Birchfield  
2 October 2023**