

**BEFORE THE HEARINGS PANEL
APPOINTED BY THE TE TAI O POUTINI JOINT COMMITTEE**

UNDER THE MATTER of the Resource Management Act 1991

AND

IN THE MATTER of the Proposed Te Tai o Poutini Plan

Topic: Rural Zones

**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF STEPHANIE STYLES
ON BEHALF OF MANAWA ENERGY LIMITED**

DATED 19 June 2024

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1.0 SUMMARY

- 1.1 My evidence focusses on the Rural zone provisions of the Proposed Te Tai o Poutini Plan (**pTTPP**) relevant to the renewable electricity generation (**REG**) operations of Manawa Energy Ltd (**Manawa**) across the West Coast Region, and renewable electricity generation generally.
- 1.2 Manawa (submitter ID number **S438**) made a limited number of submission points on this topic. The primary concerns raised were insufficient recognition of existing renewable electricity generation activities with the Rural zones, and the relationship between these provisions and those in the EIT chapter.
- 1.3 Renewable energy is a matter of national significance, and the pTTPP is required to:
- have particular regard to the benefits to be derived from the use and development of renewable energy under s7(j) of the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA); and
 - give effect to the policy directions in the National Policy Statement for Renewable Electricity Generation (NPSREG), including to recognise and provide for renewable electricity generation activities.
- 1.4 Overall, I consider that these concerns can be easily addressed by incorporation of the changes sought by Manawa in the submission. Accordingly, I have kept my evidence brief.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 My name is Stephanie Amanda Louise Styles. I hold the position of Senior Resource Management Planner with the environmental consultancy firm Boffa Miskell Limited, based in the firm's Christchurch office. I have been employed by Boffa Miskell since 2004.
- 2.2 In my brief of evidence dated 2 October 2023, in relation to the Introduction and Strategic Direction hearings, I provided an outline of my experience, my role advising Manawa, my involvement in the pTTPP process to date, and the key policy issues of relevance to Manawa.
- 2.3 I reiterate that I have read the Code of Conduct for expert witnesses in the Environment Court Practice Note 2023. I agree to comply with this Code. This evidence is within my area of expertise, except where I state that I am relying on the evidence of another

person. I have not omitted to consider material facts known to me that might alter or detract from the opinions I express.

- 2.4 As a procedural matter, I have based this evidence on the information available on the TTPP website as at 17 June 2024. I note that two of Manawa's submission points relating to this topic report (**S438.136 and S438.140**) do not appear to have been addressed in the s42A report. These points both relate to the overview sections in the chapter. I will address the relief sought in these submission points later in my evidence.

3.0 NATIONAL AND REGIONAL DIRECTION

- 3.1 The submission points from Manawa in relation to the Rural provisions were based on a concern that the provisions as notified did not recognise priorities given to REG activities in higher order documents. In particular:
- a) **NPS REG:** the key provisions of the NPS REG are contained in **Appendix Two** of my evidence. In general, the policy direction is on the recognition and provision for renewable electricity generation activities to be reconciled together with protection of other values.
 - b) **West Coast Regional Policy Statement:** Section 6, Objective 1 which states '*Enable the safe, efficient and integrated development, operation, maintenance, and upgrading of regionally and nationally significant infrastructure*'.
 - c) **Part II RMA:** Section 7(j) requires particular regard to be had to the benefits to be derived from the use and development of renewable energy.
- 3.2 I also refer to the strategic objectives established for the pTTPP (for which I provided evidence dated 26 September 2023). These strategic objectives (particularly the Connections and Resilience objectives) recognise the need to provide for infrastructure and the importance of ensuring that the West Coast / Te Tai o Poutini is resilient. In this regard it is important to recognise that Manawa's existing assets generate electricity which can be distributed along the West Coast / Te Tai o Poutini thereby supporting resilience. Ensuring the continued operation of these schemes is important to the self-sufficiency of the West Coast / Te Tai o Poutini.
- 3.3 I consider that it is appropriate that the Rural Zone provisions should reflect these policy directions as far as possible and ensure that REG activities are appropriately recognised and provided for in the zone. As discussed in the context of other zonings, even if zone rules do not apply to REG activities (because the EIT rules apply), the overview and

policy provisions for various zone chapters do still apply to various REG activities depending on activity status of an application. For this reason it is important that consideration is given to the content the objectives and policies in recognising existing activities in the Rural zone. For this reason Manawa has lodged submissions on the rural and other zones (such as Open Space zones) to ensure that the Plan recognises the operation of REG activities within these zones, and that the associated policy framework reflects this.

4.0 PART 3, AREA SPECIFIC MATTERS – ZONES – RURAL ZONES

Overview sections

4.1 Manawa made two submission points¹ seeking the insertion of wording in the overview sections of the Plan applying to land zoned for rural purposes (overview to RURZ and to GRUZ). The purpose of these inserts is to acknowledge the existence of renewable electricity generation facilities within the Rural zones generally, and specifically in the General Rural zone. These submission points do not appear to have been addressed in the s42A report².

4.2 Submission point **S438.136** sought the retention of the reference to renewable electricity generation within the RURZ overview and that there be a change to the paragraph titled 'Key Points to Note' (which applies to all Rural Zones (RURZ)) by the addition of the following bullet point:

- *Regionally significant infrastructure, and renewable electricity generation activities are provided for in the strategic directions around connections and resilience and are necessary activities within Rural zones.*

4.3 A similar change is sought to the GRUZ overview, and the amendments sought are as follows:

- Second paragraph: *The GRZ – General Rural Zone provides for primary production, such as pastoral farming, livestock, horticulture and forestry. It also provides for resource extraction such as quarrying and mining, **regionally significant infrastructure**, and intensive indoor farming, such as indoor*

¹ S438.136 and S438.140

² The Overview for the chapter was discussed in the s42A report and Ms Easton has made a number of recommendations to alter the wording as notified in relation to matters raised by other submitters. These submission points are not covered in that discussion nor are they in the table of recommendations in Appendix 2.

poultry and pig farms. These activities have the potential to generate adverse activities ...'

- Third paragraph: *'The GRZ – General Rural Zone is also characterised by an open, vegetated landscape that is interspersed with low density buildings and structures that are predominantly used for rural activities, such as barns and sheds, or larger, more numerous buildings of industrial scale and appearance used for intensive primary production or rural industry. **A number of renewable electricity generation activities are located within this zone and these activities provide a crucial role in ensuring provision of electricity supply to the West Coast and are recognised as regionally significant assets.** Rural halls, domains and schools ...'*
- Fourth paragraph: *'Where numerous or larger scale buildings or structures are proposed, their location, height and scale are managed to ensure development does not compromise the qualities of the rural setting or rural character. **A range of structures associated with regionally significant infrastructure are also a feature of the rural areas.**'*

4.4 I consider that these overview sections need to include recognition of existing REG assets to set the context for the rural areas and to acknowledge these activities which are currently located within the Rural zones. The existing REG facilities are long established in these rural areas, are regionally significant infrastructure, are important to the resilience of the West Coast and are distinguishable from 'typical' rural activities. I request that these submission points are considered by the Panel, and that the wording sought is included in these overview sections.

4.5 I note that Ms Easton has addressed other submissions made seeking amendments to the overview sections of the TTPP as they relate to rural zones. I consider that the changes sought by Manawa are not inconsistent with these recommendations (as outlined in Appendix One to the s42A report).

Policies

4.6 Manawa lodged submission points relating to policies P6, P15 and P16.

4.7 The submission point relating to P6 (**S438.137**) sought two amendments to this policy. The first amendment sought to include an explicit reference to regionally significant

infrastructure in the list of activities that the policy encompasses. Ms Easton has recommended that this be accepted³. I concur with this comment.

4.8 Secondly, the submission point sought the addition of reference 'functional and operational need'. Ms Easton has recommended that this be rejected⁴ as it would "significantly alter the policy intent" and could have "unintended consequences". Despite saying the amendment is not supported, Ms Easton has however made a different amendment to the policy within her Appendix 1 introducing a new sentence at the end of the policy that states "*In particular, regionally significant infrastructure may have a functional need to be located in rural areas in order to operate effectively*".

4.9 Manawa's intention was that the policy refer to functional and operational need as this is a legitimate reason for activities to establish in the rural areas and the submission point was particularly focused on this being important in the context of regionally significant infrastructure (RSI) as is consistent with national policy direction. I acknowledge that the wording requested by Manawa could be interpreted to apply to enabling other activities within the rural zone (not just RSI) which may not be appropriate.

4.10 On reflection, I consider that this could be more clearly expressed and I consider that the Panel has the ability to clarify this matter (within the scope of the Manawa submission). This could be either by including the sentence proposed by Ms Easton or by altering the policy as follows:

*Recognise that the rural areas may be the most appropriate location for some utility, regionally significant infrastructure, educational facilities, industrial or commercial uses to establish, where these have a functional relationship with rural areas, **or where regionally significant infrastructure has a functional or operational need to locate in that area**, provided the character and amenity of the rural areas is maintained and adverse effects are managed.*

4.11 I consider that the recommendations of Ms Easton in relation to P16⁵ (which draw on the submission lodged by Manawa (**S438.139**)) are appropriate and I do not propose to comment on these further. Similarly, Manawa supported the retention of P15 as notified (**S438.138**⁶). Ms Easton has recommended one small change to the wording of that policy⁷. I consider that this is generally consistent with the outcome sought by Manawa.

³ S42A Officer report (Te Tai o Poutini Plan, Section 42A Officer's Report, Rural Zones p 69, paragraph 135).

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ S42A Officer report (Te Tai o Poutini Plan, Section 42A Officer's Report, Rural Zones p 71, paragraph 152).

⁶ S42A Officer report (Te Tai o Poutini Plan, Section 42A Officer's Report, Rural Zones p 71, paragraph 156).

⁷ S42A Officer report (Te Tai o Poutini Plan, Section 42A Officer's Report, Rural Zones Appendix 1, p5).

Rules

4.12 Manawa did not submit on the rules within the Rural zone as these do not apply to REG activities. Manawa sought an advice note be added to this effect (**S438.141**). Ms Easton has recommended that this be included⁸, with additional changes proposed such that the wording also refer to the relevance of other Plan chapters. I do not have an issue with the wording she has proposed.

5.0 CONCLUSION

5.1 As outlined in my evidence on other chapters, I consider that there is a necessity to ensure integration across the plan in the application of provisions that deal with renewable electricity generation activities. I reiterate the relief sought by Manawa in its submission. I consider that the changes proposed are consistent with the enabling provisions of higher level documents and the strategic directions provisions of the pTTPP.

⁸ S42A Officer report (Te Tai o Poutini Plan, Section 42A Officer's Report, Rural Zones p 181, paragraph 113.

APPENDIX ONE: KEY POLICIES FROM THE NPSREG

The particular policies that are most relevant to the development of the pTTPP (emphasis added):

POLICY A

Decision-makers shall recognise and provide for the national significance of renewable electricity generation activities, including the national, regional and local benefits relevant to renewable electricity generation activities. These benefits include, but are not limited to: ...

POLICY B

Decision-makers shall have particular regard to the following matters:

a) maintenance of the generation output of existing renewable electricity generation activities can require protection of the assets, operational capacity and continued availability of the renewable energy resource; and

b) even minor reductions in the generation output of existing renewable electricity generation activities can cumulatively have significant adverse effects on national, regional and local renewable electricity generation output; and

c) meeting or exceeding the New Zealand Government's national target for the generation of electricity from renewable resources will require the significant development of renewable electricity generation activities.

POLICY C1

Decision-makers shall have particular regard to the following matters:

a) the need to locate the renewable electricity generation activity where the renewable energy resource is available;

b) logistical or technical practicalities associated with developing, upgrading, operating or maintaining the renewable electricity generation activity;

c) the location of existing structures and infrastructure including, but not limited to, roads, navigation and telecommunication structures and facilities, the distribution network and the national grid in relation to the renewable electricity generation activity, and the need to connect renewable electricity generation activity to the national grid; ...

POLICY C2

When considering any residual environmental effects of renewable electricity generation activities that cannot be avoided, remedied or mitigated, decision-makers shall have regard to offsetting measures or environmental compensation including measures or compensation which benefit the local environment and community affected.

POLICY D

Decision-makers shall, to the extent reasonably possible, manage activities to avoid reverse sensitivity effects on consented and on existing renewable electricity generation activities.

POLICY E2

Regional policy statements and regional and district plans shall include objectives, policies, and methods (including rules within plans) to provide for the development, operation, maintenance, and upgrading of new and existing hydro-electricity generation activities to the extent applicable to the region or district.

POLICY G

Regional policy statements and regional and district plans shall include objectives, policies, and methods (including rules within plans) to provide for activities associated with the investigation, identification and assessment of potential sites and energy sources for renewable electricity generation by existing and prospective generators.