

**BEFORE AN INDEPENDENT HEARINGS PANEL
THE PROPOSED WAIKATO DISTRICT PLAN (STAGE 1)**

UNDER the Resource Management Act 1991 (the Act)

IN THE MATTER OF Hearing 21A: Natural Environments – Indigenous Vegetation
Habitats (Proposed Waikato District Plan)
submissions and further submissions

**SUMMARY STATEMENT OF MICHAEL WOOD FOR WAKA KOTAHI
(THE NZ TRANSPORT AGENCY) – PLANNING AND CORPORATE**

DATED 16 NOVEMBER 2020

1. SUMMARY STATEMENT

1.1 Waka Kotahi (the Transport Agency) is a submitter and further submitter on the Proposed Waikato District Plan (PWDP).

1.2 I have reviewed the s42A reports, including the Council's Rebuttal evidence and I support the author's recommendations in relation to the Transport Agency's submission points. In particular, the recommendations relating to:

- The mapping and protection of Significant Natural Areas (SNAs) in the PWDP; and
- Additions made to Policy 3.2.6.

2.0 Section 42A report: Part 3 – Mapping and Protection of Significant Natural Areas

2.1 Waka Kotahi lodged submission 742.185 which sought to delete those SNAs mapped on existing NZTA designations. The s42A report writer accepts this point in part, to the extent that the SNAs will only be mapped on NZTA's designations once ground truthed.

2.2 I have reconsidered the Waka Kotahi submission and advise that we do not seek the total removal of SNAs from our designations. I am generally supportive of the use of SNAs as a tool to protect ecological areas.

2.3 In the Waikato District, there are approximately 25 SNAs located in Waka Kotahi designations. I have been advised by Council officers that these 25 SNAs have not been ground truthed. In addition, I also understand from the Council's rebuttal evidence that some of these maps are based on spatial data from 2012 which is less than ideal. In my EIC, I have provided examples from SH1 (Waikato Expressway Huntly section) which demonstrates how SNAs can change overtime. A district plan needs to incorporate accurate and (reasonably) up to date information to ensure that the rules achieve their stated outcomes.

2.4 Based on the absence of ground truthing and the mapping source date, I support the recommendation of the reporting officer to remove these mapped SNAs until such time that a future plan change(s) is undertaken to assess whether these SNAs (and others) exhibit the criteria needed to support their inclusion and mapping in the District Plan (see Option 5 – paragraph 71, Part 1 - Objectives and Policies). The ground truthing of SNAs is a process I am familiar with having been involved (on behalf of Waka Kotahi) with the Significant Ecological Area (SEA) topic under the Auckland Unitary Plan.

2.5 I also support relying on the criteria set out in Appendix 2 of the PWDP (Option 5) as an interim protection measure for these areas until such time that a plan change(s) has been undertaken to assess whether these SNAs (and others) exhibit the criteria needed to support their inclusion and mapping in the District Plan. I do acknowledge that this approach still provides a level of uncertainty for landowners; it does, however, offer a level of pragmatism to address the shortfalls (in most cases) of the SNA identification process which the s42A report has alluded to.

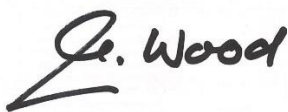
3.0 **Policy 3.2.6 – Providing for vegetation clearance**

3.1 Waka Kotahi lodged submission 742.8 seeking to amend Policy 3.2.6 by adding two additional clauses as follows –

(v) operating maintaining or upgrading existing infrastructure; and

(vi) the construction and operation of new regionally significant infrastructure where there is a need for that infrastructure to be located within the Significant Natural Area.

3.2 The reporting officer accepts this submission in part; clause (v) has been accepted and clause (vi) has been rejected. I support this recommendation; the ability to operate, maintain or upgrade existing infrastructure in SNA areas (clause v) provides the necessary operational flexibility Waka Kotahi requires to operate the state highway network. In relation to clause (v), I accept the reasoning provided under paragraph 251 (Natural Environments I – Indigenous Vegetation and Habitats) noting that the PWDP ultimately does not preclude the ability for network utility providers like Waka Kotahi to make an application for new works in SNA areas.



Mike Wood

Principal Planner

Waka Kotahi (The Transport Agency)

16th November 2020