

Proposed District Plan Hearing Stream 11 - Oral Submissions

Submitter 411: Terawhiti Station

Good morning. My name is Michael Grace. I am a director and shareholder of Terawhiti Farming Co Ltd, Te Kamaru Station Ltd, and Te Marama Ltd. All three properties are collection known and farmed as Terawhiti Station. The Station is the largest landholding in Wellington and comprises approximately 4,800 hectares. I am here today speaking on behalf of my family's significant interest in this policy. Our main points of submission are:

- 1. Infringement on Private Property Rights:** At the core of the issue is the infringement on private property rights. The designation of SNAs on private land involves identifying areas of significant indigenous vegetation or habitats of indigenous fauna and imposing restrictions on how these areas can be used. For us as landowners, this means that significant portions of the land could be subject to controls that limit development, farming practices, and even access. The unilateral imposition of SNAs without the owner's consent or adequate compensation is an unjust encroachment on the foundational principle of private property rights.
- 2. Unfair Land Use Restrictions:** The restrictions imposed by SNAs are often broad and can severely limit the economic potential of the land. For a property like Terawhiti Station, which has a long and proud agricultural history, these restrictions can be particularly damaging. SNAs directly limit land use productivity while at the same time Wellington City Council's rate demands only increases. That is unjust.
- 3. Discouragement of Voluntary Conservation:** Fear of stricter regulations discourages landowners from voluntarily engaging with and enhancing ecological value – both flora and fauna. Terawhiti Station was the foundational property from which the Capital Kiwi programme was able to flourish. We are voluntarily and actively engaging in activities that are enhancing Wellington's environment. However the risk of SNAs and other potential restrictions being forced onto the station directly risks these voluntary conservation efforts. Why would we enter into anymore initiatives if they may trigger SNA designations and further restrictions. Why would we? No one can say that we oppose conservation. We are not opposed to conservation. We are opposed to Council imposing the restrictive SNA overlays. "Its not Council imposing this legislation" you might say. Which brings me to my next point:
- 4. Legislative Changes:** The recent introduction of the Resource Management Amendment Bill by the Government has further highlighted the challenges associated with SNAs on private property. This bill, which suspends the mandatory identification and regulation of SNAs, underscores the growing recognition of the unfair burden these designations place on landowners. By shifting towards a more flexible and voluntary approach to environmental protection, the government acknowledges that the previous SNA framework was too rigid and did not adequately consider the rights and interests of property owners.

This legislative change is significant for currently identified SNAs, as it allows for the possibility of re-evaluating or even removing SNA designations that were imposed without proper consultation or consideration of the economic impacts on landowners. For Terawhiti Station, this shift represents a crucial step towards restoring the balance between environmental stewardship and property rights. It also serves as a clear indication that the government is

willing to listen to the concerns of landowners and adjust its policies accordingly. Wellington City Council should do the same.

5. Hypocrisy in Wellington City Council's SNA Approach: Wellington City Council's decision to apply SNAs exclusively to rural properties, while avoiding their imposition on urban properties with significant indigenous biodiversity, highlights a glaring inconsistency in its approach to environmental protection, and quite frankly its credibility. The council's decision appears to be driven more by political and social considerations—i.e. lets avoid the greater urban backlash and just go after the easy option – a smaller number of rural landowners.

6. In Conclusion: Terawhiti Station vehemently opposes the imposition of SNAs on private properties without landowner consent. The designation of SNAs infringes on our private property rights, imposes unfair restrictions on land use, and discourages the very conservation efforts we have voluntarily engaged with.

If I haven't been clear enough thus far we asking the panel to remove all SNAs from Terawhiti Station.

Thank you.