

Tabled at Hearing on 16 November 2015

STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE BY DAVID HEWSON FOR SOUTH CANTERBURY FEDERATED FARMERS

PROPOSED PLAN CHANGE 3 (SOUTH COASTAL CANTERBURY STREAMS) TO THE CANTERBURY LAND AND WATER REGIONAL PLAN.

My name is David Hewson. In partnership with my wife Robyn, I own a dryland farm at Esk Valley, inland from St Andrews just south of Timaru. We are the 3rd generation of Hewson's to farm this land as my grandfather purchased a part of it in 1920 as a WW1 returned serviceman. Our son will shortly start farming this land, making him the 4th generation to have continuously farmed at Esk Valley.

My father Colin started to intensify the production of this land in the late 1960's as improved techniques became available. He moved to a mixed cropping regime as this suited the summer dry climate of the area.

Colin was joined by my brother and myself in the early 1980's which allowed more land to be acquired. The deregulation of the wheat industry in the late 1980's was a big challenge for us as farmers. The price of milling wheat, which was now based on the world market price, fell to much lower levels and making a margin was difficult. The price of wheat did not rise above the price of the late 1980's until about the year 2000. To survive we had to produce more wheat per ha and this saw a revolution in NZ wheat yields, enabled by increasing fertiliser inputs and better control of disease.

Our farm at Esk Valley has been leased for the past 10 years (covering the 2009-2013 baseline period) by a farmer who has run a livestock enterprise. The land was farmed conservatively, with an estimated N discharge of 6 kg N/ha/year.

Prior to leasing the farm, of 455ha, we were growing arable crops on approximately 300ha and had an intensive bull finishing unit on 40 ha. Consequently we were cultivating and intensively cropping a large area of our farm annually.

The leasee by contrast has a large area of the farm in permanent grass and the area cultivated is relatively small.

As I have illustrated my family has had to move with the times to remain in the farming industry. We also understand that science and monitoring the environment has helped us to better understand the impact that intensification has had on natural resources. We wish to remain in the farming industry into the future and wish work to enhance our environment and are keen to adopt any new practise that will achieve this.

My son (Peter) will take over the farm from January 2016 and will farm a mixed livestock/cropping enterprise. Peter will be starting his farming career at this date and is having to borrow money to buy stock & equipment. He will have to borrow all the money to cash flow his venture. This means he will have to intensify from the current farming system operated by the leasee, and move into a more intensive cropping regime, as we have operated in the past prior to leasing the farm.

While we are keen to embrace nutrient allocations that will enhance our environment we are also concerned about the new allocations. Especially the flexibility cap limits and whether the allocation will affect my son's farming operations and allow him to resume the more intensive mixed livestock/cropping he requires in order to be financially viable. My son is returning to operating our farm in accordance with an historically similar regime to that operated previously, but the baseline for the farm was measured over a short period when it was being farmed in a different style. The nutrient measurement during the time of the leasee may limit my son's choices in farming.

It is also of concern that numerical limits will be set while there are still major issues with the tool used for measuring compliance. I note other farmers have seen major variations with the latest version of the *Overseer* model. Some farmers' previously acceptable figures have jumped by a large amount and are now too high, even though their farming practices haven't actually changed.

I am happy to answer any questions from the Hearing Panel.

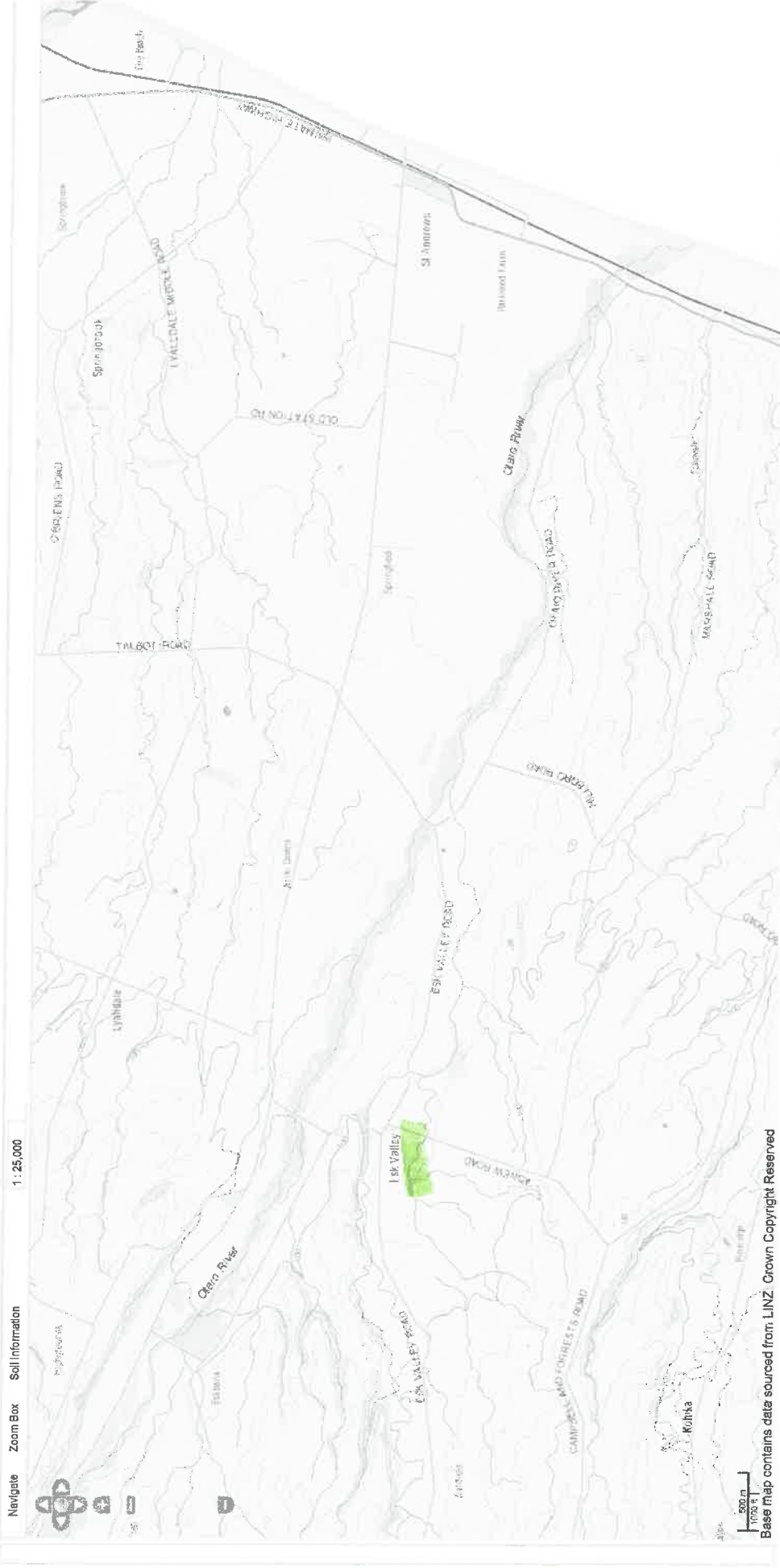
David Hewson

Date: 16th November 2015



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