

**From:** [Sue Ruston](#)  
**To:** [Plan Hearings](#)  
**Cc:** [samsb@xtra.co.nz](mailto:samsb@xtra.co.nz); [Platinumfarming](#); [Merv Todd](#); [David Winter](#); [Mark Christensen](#); [Grant Edmundson](#)  
**Subject:** PC7 - Evidence for Next Generation Farmers Trust  
**Date:** Friday, 17 July 2020 5:48:12 pm  
**Attachments:** [PC7 - NGFT - Evidence of Dan Encell.pdf](#)  
[PC7 - NGFT - Evidence of J Austin.pdf](#)  
[PC7 - NGFT - Evidence of R Nortje.pdf](#)  
[PC7 - NGFT - Expert Evidence Planning Susan Ruston.pdf](#)  
[PC7 - NGFT - Evidence of D and R Clark.pdf](#)  
[PC7 - NGFT - Evidence of Victoria Travnor.pdf](#)  
[PC7 - NGFT - Evidence of Sam Spencer-Bower for NGFT.pdf](#)

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Good afternoon

I have been instructed by the Next Generation Farmers Trust to lodge, on their behalf, the attached evidence in accordance with Minute 1 to Proposed Plan Change 7 to the Canterbury Land and Water Regional Plan.

Your sincerely

Sue Ruston

**IN THE MATTER OF**

The Resource Management Act  
1991

**AND**

**IN THE MATTER OF**

Proposed Plan Change 7 to the  
Canterbury Land and Water  
Regional Plan

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**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF Jonathan Austin**

**17 JULY 2020**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION AND OUTCOME REQUESTED

- 1.1. My full name is Jonathan Austin.
- 1.2. I made a personal submission, Submitter Number 406.
- 1.3. I am the owner of a 600ha dairy support, beef and cropping farm at 431 Harmans Gorge Rd, View Hill. The property is in the Nitrate Priority Sub-area A.
- 1.4. I have a Diploma in Agriculture and Farm Management from Lincoln University (1984/85). I started farming on the property in 1989. I completed the Executive Development programme for primary producers in 2004, winning the prize for best presentation. I also completed the Executive Programme of Meat Melbourne in 2004. In 2014, I obtained a Masters in Property from Lincoln University, with my dissertation titled: 'Farmers perceptions of ECAN's proposed, "good practice discharge allowance" in the Waimakariri sub region of Environment Canterbury's (ECAN) district of New Zealand'.
- 1.5. I am a member of the Next Generation Farmers Trust. I became a member of the Trust because the people involved are young, energetic, enthusiastic, good people who care deeply about sustainable farming for the betterment of current and future generations of farmers and their communities. I support the changes to PC7 sought by the Trust.
- 1.6. I am committed to running my farm in an environmentally responsible manner, and I understand the need to change practices over time to further reduce nutrient losses. However, I am concerned that PC7 as notified will result in the need for changes which put my farming operation, and other farming operations in the district at risk of being financially unsustainable. I want to remain a profitable operation so I can afford to make the changes which are necessary to achieve the outcomes sought.
- 1.7. I wish to be part of the solution to water quality issues in the Waimakariri and I believe that Environment Canterbury working in partnership with the Next Generation Farmers Trust and others will be the best way to achieve the environmental gains sought while continuing to run a profitable farm.

## **2. MY EXISTING FARMING OPERATION**

- 2.1. Our family farm consists of 600ha of intensive grazing.
- 2.2. 30% of the property is 'good land' which consists of 100ha of pivot irrigation. We do not winter graze this land because of fear of losing soil structure with the intensive grazing therefore losing productivity.
- 2.3. We have changed grass species on our less productive soils. This has achieved two big improvements. First, it has reduced grass grub which has significantly increased production. Secondly, we have planted more legumes in the mix to greatly improve the amount of natural nitrogen fixation. This has significantly reduced the amount of nitrogen applied.
- 2.4. We have adopted winter feed stations for silage for winter feeding. This has achieved less soil damage by reducing the use of big machinery on paddocks. This has resulted in better utilisation of expensive winter feed and increased stock weight gains.

## **3. REDUCING THE NUTRIENT LOSSES FROM MY FARM**

- 3.1. To achieve a 15% reduction in baseline nutrient loss numbers by 2030 is going to require more analysis and advice from plant and soil scientists to help us both increase/maintain production and to reduce our nutrient losses. My initial work shows that this will have a real negative financial effect, not only in terms of capital costs, but in ongoing profitability. Achieving further reductions by 2040 is going to be a further stretch for my farming operations.
- 3.2. Achieving a goal by 2040 is a long way out. If I was to have thought in 2000 where we would now be in terms of technology and efficiencies of farming practices, I would not have guessed it. While I can see a way forward, at a stretch, to achieving reductions by 2040, I cannot currently conceive of how I would go about making further reductions beyond that if that were necessary, as farms are required to do in other Nitrate Priority sub-areas.

- 3.3. In achieving the required reductions, I believe it will be important to work with the NGFT to empower farmers and to provide collaboration between local government and farmers.
- 3.4. While I accept the need to reduce nitrate losses from my farm, I also wish to point out that small urban septic waste disposal also has an influence on Nitrate levels in groundwater. I quote from my literature review in my Dissertation:

*“Other ways nitrate enters underground waterways from human involvement. Yates (2006) reported surface waters like streams and lakes are not the only water sources that suffer from pollution. Revenga & Mock (October 2000) states groundwater aquifers, which are critical sources of both drinking water and irrigation water, are also affected and the major causes of groundwater pollution is the leaching of pollutants from agriculture, industry, and untreated sewage. Yates (2006) studied septic tank density and ground water contamination in the USA. Yates (2006) went further than Revenga & Mock (October 2000), with the study suggesting bacteria and viruses present in domestic sewage cause the majority of waterborne disease outbreaks. Yates (2006) suggested septic tanks contribute the largest volume of wastewater and the single most important means of limiting groundwater contamination by septic tanks is to restrict the density of these systems in an area. Viraraghavan & Warnock (1976) specifically targeted different soil types and suggested that a failure of soil absorption may cause bacterial contamination of ground and surface waters. In conclusion this literature indicates human septic tanks influence nitrates and phosphates entering and contaminating groundwater”.*

#### **4. THE PARTNERSHIP APPROACH PROPOSED BY THE NEXT GENERATION FARMERS TRUST**

- 4.1. As I have noted, using platforms like NGFT to empower farmers and to collaborate between local government and farmers is, in my opinion, the best solution. Everybody in the farming community knows that farming practices and environmental management need to continue to improve. NGFT have a great understanding and knowledge of the issues involved and are in the best place to influence farmers to collectively achieve the outcome needed.

#### **5. CONCLUSION**

- 5.1. I acknowledge that farmers need to continue to improve our environmental footprint. All parts of the community do. However, requiring unattainable reductions in nitrate losses too far out to be meaningful for farmers does not allow confidence in either the agriculture sector or ECAN in achieving those outcomes. Research, collaboration, science and technology and forward-thinking people from the farming community, such as NGFT will, on the other hand, help achieve realistic requirements.

Jonathan Austin

17 July 2020