

Submitter: H.R. Turnbull

Address :700 Reeces Rd, Omihi, RD3, Amberley 7483

Phone : 03 3145875

Email : turnbull.chilternhills@xtra.co.nz

Hearing : I wish to speak

Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

We own a dry land store stock farm of approximately 750Ha of medium to steep hill country in Omihi, North Canterbury (which includes a 20Ha QEII covenant).

The planned overall rates rise is diabolical and if these proposed huge rate rises go through they will never come down again. Over the length of the LTP the cumulative increases for both options are excessive: I calculated approximately 70% for Option 1.

Only two options are presented. There is no 'live within your means and concentrate on core business' option. I wish I could go out and come up with a wish list and get others to pay for it.

Ecan staff and councillors need to seriously re-examine the LTP plan to ensure that the work proposed is totally necessary and undertake reasonable cost/benefit analyses, and not just work on a wish list. There is work to be done (ie cleaning out weeds and willows from smaller braided rivers) but the proposed increases are excessive, and it is hard to find much detail of exactly where the money will be spent in the consultative document compared to the current year.

It is disappointing to see the Ecan chair highlighting the minimal rate rises for Christchurch ratepayers. The headline reads 'Bite the bullet on rates' (Northern Outlook 31 March 2021) but for rural ratepayers it is like having a high explosive artillery shell rammed down your throat. I could put up with the quoted average increase of \$1.55 per week for Christchurch ratepayers. All that means is that there are large numbers of other ratepayers who will have increases significantly above the quoted values. Using the rates calculator under Option 1 our rates would increase 27% from \$2062 to \$2630 and under Option 2 18% to \$2435 for the current year. Under Option 1 this is an increase of \$568, equating to \$50.57 per week. This increase for our property is more than the total rate bill quoted for the average Christchurch property of \$519.95 under Option 1.

In the interests of fairness for all, Ecan should be using the maximum allowable UAGC percentage take for rates. Property values do not correlate to incomes and ability to pay. Using Ecan's rate calculator for the UAGC the higher UAGC option limits our rate increase to about 12% for Option 1, which is still way to high.

More items should come out of UAGC. For example all of the Regional and Strategic Leadership could come out of the UAGC.

The items removed from the proposed UAGC that are in the current year UAGC should all be included in the proposed UAGC.

The Youth Engagement and Education scheme should be scrapped as this should be a job for the Ministry of Education.

Ecan needs to seriously look at the efficiencies of its internal processes to ensure that staff work and engage honestly, pragmatically and with integrity with ratepayers. For example; several years ago Ecan covertly mapped supposed wetlands on rural properties from satellite imagery data and created a publically available database without informing landowners. Another was when the Regional Pest Management Plan was reviewed in 2017, where numerous farmers submitted on nassella stating that the annual grubbing time cut off date should be more flexible for harder hill country, but the submissions were all ignored by Ecan staff when they produced their recommendations. Due to issues that arose over the 2017 nassella season Ecan is now engaging in an expensive co-design process for nassella control, when the existing rules are adequate as long as though they are enforced pragmatically. Consenting processes, costs and delays are another issue seriously affecting rural ratepayers.

Our farm has been on the receiving end of heavy handed Ecan staff actions. On standing up against the actions, which included Ecan reneging on an agreement, Ecan undertaking a seriously deficient tender process involving among other things a serious conflict of interest (PWC investigated the process at ratepayers expense, costing about \$15000, but unfortunately did not examine a very suspect scoring process which resulted in the most expensive tender who provided no evidence of having undertaken that type of work, winning the tender), Ecan trying to shut down communication numerous times etc., Ecan has caused our family a lot of unnecessary stress and grief. The total cost to ratepayers of this totally unnecessary issue will be well in excess of \$50,000 to date and has still not been resolved. How many other such issues are festering away at ratepayers expense?

Ecan should join forces with all other regional and local councils to strenuously lobby central government that the more rules they place on local government the more money they are sucking out of the productive economy, especially pertinent in the current situation. Ecan by statute has to write numerous plans, which by the time they have gone through all the consultation stages are generally out of date, as by then new central government rules have come into force. The RMA is about to be reviewed and I understand that will affect all plans already written, which will be another central government cost imposed on ratepayers.

In summary:

- Both proposed rate increase options are excessive
- The percentage of rates obtained by the UAGC should be significantly increased
- Ecan needs to seriously look at its internal processes
- All regional councils need to pressure central government to reduce compliance costs

Thank you

H R Turnbull