

Good morning Mr Chairman and Commisnoneers,

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to our submission to the Land and Water plan on behalf of the Brentleigh Family Trust

For those of you who don't know me my name is Brian Dillon I now live on a small block adjacent to the town of Riversdale but for the previous 65years lived and farmed at Ardlussa on a property adjacent to the Mataura river and Keowns bridge.

My family have been land holders in that area since 1919 and through the generations have been great sustainable stewards of the land.

My wife Mary and I were married in 1973 and took over 400acres of the family farm, the farming operation was predominately sheep with some cattle and a paddock of oats.

By working very hard and diversifying our farming practices over the years we were fortunate enough to be able to purchase a neighbouring farm during the mid eighties downturn and another neighbour a couple of years later. Over the years we have gradually changed the farming operation by decreasing the sheep and increasing the arable cropping, all the while being very mindful of the different soil types and structures we were managing, In 1994 we were one of the first in the district to add dairy support to our operation, by grazing young replacement stock for farmers from other areas of Southland and South Otago as there were no dairy farms in our area.

Over the past twenty years we have further diversified by adding deer to the operation, this has brought challenges, but we have been able to manage the stock with no detriment to the soil and drainage structure. We have also added another three farms to the operation, making six contiguous blocks, which is why we are opposed to the ridiculous rule 23.

This is a grossly unfair rule and should be based on area rather than title, it also adds another cost of compliance on to the rural sector. The recent SoRDS initiative has as one of its main objectives "ease of doing business". Environment Southland, Southland District and Gore District Councils are very strong supporters of this, it would seem to me that this is contrary to the spirit of this widely embraced initiative.

Mary and I raised three children on the property and are both very involved in the community, I spent fifteen years as first of all local school committee chairman and then as board of trustees chairman for the primary then the local secondary college, whilst our family attended.

In 1998 I was elected unopposed to the Southland District Council and have remained in that position for the past nineteen years, this allowed my son Chris to take on the day to day running of the property and ultimately take over the whole farming operation. During my time as a district councillor, you will appreciate that I have been involved in many district and annual plans, and understand how the process works.

With all due respect to the Environment Southland councillors I can categorically state that I (as an elected representative of the ratepayers of this magnificent province) could not have allowed this document to go out the way it has.

This plan has some very good and sensible parts to it and council is to be congratulated on those very good points.

However there are some parts to this plan that show a complete lack of understanding of land management, I repeat a complete lack of understanding of land management.

I believe that the Councillors have completely abdicated their responsibilities to the ratepayers by allowing this document to go out in this form, this irresponsible action of putting this plan out in this form has resulted in hundreds of submissions and thousands of hours of work and thousands of dollars of unnecessary expenditure by ratepayers doing the work that council staff should have done properly before the plan went out. There is a tremendous amount of factual information available which Council staff have chosen to ignore.

Ok so I've had a swipe at Environment Southland for a very shabby performance and I make no apologies for that.

Council could have done a lot better. Council has got it wrong, now lets get it right !

Now we must be positive and move on to get the right outcomes for our ratepayers, agriculture and the very important flow on businesses in this great province.

take it that you have all read my submission and I would now request at this stage that we could bring in Chris and Rochelle to carry on in combination with the Dillon Ag submission,

Thank you very much for your time and the opportunity to speak

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Submitter Name:  
Brentleigh Family Trust

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