

# Proposed Southland Water and Land Plan

## Hearing Statement – Andrew Morrison, B+LNZ Southern South Island Director.

1. My name is Andrew Morrison.
2. I am a sheep and beef farmer in Southland. Lisa and our two teenage children, farm 1,030 hectares in the Southland and Otago regions.
3. In addition to being a farmer, I see real value in participating in industry beyond the farm gate. Currently I am on the B+LNZ Board of Directors, acting as the Southern Southland Director, as well as the B+LNZ Board's Deputy Chair. I am in front of you in this capacity today.
4. I am also a Director on the Boards of
  - Ballance Agri-Nutrients;
  - New Zealand Meat Board;
  - Pastoral Green House Gas Research Consortium;
  - Ovis Management Ltd;
  - Wool Research Organisation of New Zealand(WRONZ);
  - Agricultural Leaders Health and Safety Action Group (ALHSAG); and
  - I have been involved with Environment Southland since the inception of the "Cumulative Effects" through to Water and Land 2020 steering group.
5. My off farm involvement in agricultural governance roles is based around a desire to help shape the success of the agricultural industry that is vital to the success of the New Zealand economy. That is to find win-win solutions that result in a thriving sheep and beef sector and community. I am acutely aware that we cannot have a confident and profitable sheep and beef sector without making sure we manage our natural resources in a way that results in clean water, healthy soil and landscapes that support a range of biodiversity.
6. I am here today as a fifth generation farmer. In my short time on the land I have been blessed to work with my grandfather, father and children. Through these generations schools have been built and schools have closed. Meat works have been built, meat companies have amalgamated and meat works have been closed. Dairy

factories have been built, dairy companies amalgamated and dairy factories have closed. Nothing is more constant than change and yet community and the land remain. As a farmer who cares about community and industry, and as a farmer who cares about our environment, I strongly believe that regulation should empower responsibility at a farm level, not dictate its future.

7. I am just going to take couple of minutes to talk to you about our region's sheep and beef farmers, and how B+LNZ is helping the sector to strive for environmental excellence.
8. Sheep and beef farming is intrinsically linked to the wellbeing of Southland. Our farming systems are complex and dynamic, and diverse. There is no "typical" when it comes to sheep and beef farms. So many of the decisions we make are influenced by a complex mix of our unique set of environmental, social, cultural and economic factors. It makes sense then that any regulation has to account for how those decisions are made. There is no one solution to natural resource management across Southlands sheep and beef farms.
9. Sheep and beef farmers take a long-term view when it comes to managing their businesses. Many Southland farmers (as in my case) are the second, third, or fourth plus generation, and we plan to provide for many more generations to farm the land yet.
10. Protecting and enhancing the environment is the only way we can maintain a viable business that will sustain our families through the generations. Protecting and enhancing the environment is central to every on-farm decision we make. Sometimes this is not always immediately obvious to people outside of our sector. I've sat at many tables where farmers and council staff speak in different languages, ultimately talking past one-another even though they are fundamentally saying the same thing. For example, Environment Southland might refer to a 'GMP' whereas a farmer would call this same action 'common sense' but both are actually saying "let's do it this way to minimise possible damage to the environment."
11. Having said that, none of us are perfect. Every farmer can find ways to enhance the environmental outcomes within their farming business. But the factors that influence how we do this are unique to every farming enterprise. There are no two combinations of animals, soils, geography, debt levels, information, age, family, or production that are the same.

12. Farmer driven and owned Farm Environment Plans or FEPs are one tool available to help farmers optimise their unique set of circumstances. With an FEP, farmers can identify the risks and opportunities associated with their farm, and then put actions in place that will optimise business and environmental goals. FEPs are a keystone tool within the B+LNZ toolbox, and are available to all levy payers.
13. FEPs, when fully utilised, foster farmer driven continual improvement that is adaptive to each farmer's dynamic business. I believe we will achieve the best environmental outcomes for the region with a planning framework in place that encourages and allows for farmer innovation, flexibility, and a culture of front footing any environmental issues.
14. This is the aim of B+LNZ's environment programme. The team works to drive and empower farmer leadership, and provide tools, knowledge, and resources to help prioritise and make sound use of natural resources. In other words, we work to nurture our farmers' thirst for environmental information, and empower farmer driven action.
15. Through Council's consultation on the proposed Southland Water and Land Plan, B+LNZ's Environment Team worked to help farmers find their voice, or "teach our farmers to fish" if you will - except in this case we were teaching our farmers how to "request a decision".
16. The RMA process is foreign and quite frankly daunting to many farmers. You may be aware that there is a higher incidence of dyslexia and illiteracy in the farming community compared with the general population. This can mean that all the reading and writing involved in responding to a proposed Plan, can make engagement seem quite unachievable for some of those in the farming community. Many times during the B+LNZ workshops I heard farmers give eloquent explanations of why a proposal may or may not work in practice, but as soon as they were handed a pen to write it down, they suddenly had trouble articulating their views.
17. For these reasons, it takes real guts for farmers to front up and provide feedback on the proposed Plan. Ultimately, it's these farmers who will be implementing large tracts of the Plan, so it's important that we really listen to what they have to say and provide them with a system that fosters innovation, adaptability, and a drive to front foot issues. The purpose of B+LNZ's support for these farmers within this planning process, was to engage them meaningfully in the 'why'. When it comes to implementing the plan, we want farmers to have a strong sense of ownership and purpose, and if they have been listened to,

they will act faster and collectively to improve land and water management throughout the region.

18. The sheep and beef farmers you have already heard from, and will continue to hear over the course of the next weeks and months, have fronted up because they are genuinely concerned about our region's freshwater resources and the wellbeing of our community. They want a Plan that allows land use flexibility and innovation, but provides council with certainty that freshwater resources are being maintained or improved. Southland's sheep and beef farmers are custodians of the land, and are looking for practical on-ground and win-win solutions for everyone. As you listen to them, please remember that sometimes the language they use to communicate this may sound different to the professionals, but good environmental outcomes are at the heart of everything they are saying. In a nutshell, farming is natural resource management at its purest, and sheep and beef farmers strive to care for the land and water under their stewardship.

19. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. I'm happy to take any questions