

Water & Land Plan Hearing 11 September 2017

My name is Sue Miller and I am an independent contractor, trading as Rural Secretarial Services, and as such I do administration work for farmers. I hold a Bachelor in Horticulture Science & have many years accounting experience. I wear two hats as I am also a farmer, with my husband Rob, on the banks of the Mataura River.

I have worked for Wilkins Farming for 10 years. In that time, the business has bought 8 new farms and leased 2 new farms, with a resultant increase in the number of staff employed. For example, ten years ago, there was just Pam & I in the office, now there are 5 of us.

There are now 55 staff employed excluding the Wilkins themselves. This is broken down as follows

4 in the office

7 in Maintenance

11 stockmen

17 machine operators

17 Dairy staff

The majority of staff live on-farm, where Wilkins have 18 staff houses. The remainder live in either Riversdale, Balfour or Lumsden. Staff range in age from 18 through to 70 & Wilkins also employ Lincoln students seeking practical work experience over the summer break.

Wilkins Farming are therefore major employers in the Wendonside area, which has a large economic benefit to the local community and contributes to both Balfour & Riversdale schools, the cricket & rugby clubs, churches & volunteer organisations such as Lions. Wilkins also have several staff who are volunteer firemen.

Wilkins Farming's mix of cropping and dairy support is vital for the continued employment of many of these staff, as during the winter when there is no cropping work to be done, those staff are fully

employed doing dairy grazing rather than being stood down. Staff turnover is an unwanted cost for any business & Wilkins Farming has found a solution to what would otherwise be seasonable jobs. This way, they have experienced staff who know the farm and are competent in operating large machinery which helps with Wilkins' repairs and maintenance costs & also their Health & Safety commitments. This continuation in employment also helps the local community and is especially important to those families with school-age children.

Wilkins Farming also employs local contractors. For example, to make silage, to make baleage, to shear & crutch sheep, for muck spreading, for crop & weed spraying, for dipping & for plant hire. This in turn, helps local employment and thus the community.

Wilkins Farming actively supports local suppliers as much as possible for example using engineers, electricians & joiners from Balfour & Riversdale. They also support businesses in Garston, Lumsden & Gore.

Wilkins Farming are involved in community sponsorship, donating to dog trials & to rugby. Their support for the Southfuels Fuels in Schools programme has given Balfour School \$7500 over the last 2 years, which is a huge boost for the school.

Small communities have always been the lifeblood of New Zealand but without employment, businesses will close & people will move away, leaving the town to wither and die. Wilkins Farming is an essential part of their rural community and if they are not able to continue their farming business, it will adversely affect a large area of the rural heartland.