

Plan Change 7: Water Permits

Supplementary Summary for Oral presentation, Cromwell 13 May 2021

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As there have been a number of developments and options discussed that would affect the hydrology of the area covered by the plan since I lodged my evidence in chief, I have some supplementary summary comments to make:

1. In my opinion it is important we view water allocation in the wider context of an increasingly stressed hydrological environment (e.g., climate change, freshwater quantity and quality) and a shrinking window of opportunity to effectively respond. Notwithstanding the interim nature of this plan change, it would be in everyone's interest if it could be a catalyst for the deeper structural shift in landuse so urgently required to restore and maintain hydrological health of freshwater bodies.
2. There is a risk of perceiving both water supply and water demand too rigidly, when both have significant room for modification. Such modification can be employed to better secure both aquatic ecosystems and provide for abstractive needs.
3. There has been a pattern of plans and plan changes in Otago that have failed to achieve their anticipated water management outcomes. In my view, it is possible to implement measures now that break this cycle and deliver a speedier restoration and maintenance of hydrological health.
4. We know now what is required to protect/re-establish healthy life supporting river systems. We also have the means to provide good estimates of naturalized flow for all rivers in Otago as a basis for developing environmental flow regimes.
5. Even with the plan change amendments proposed by the joint witness statement of 4 – 6 May 2021, there remains too much uncertainty that sustainable water management will be achieved. This was why I sought the views of the conference on the following 3 questions concerning timely implementation.
 - a) How it is anticipated that environmental flow provisions can be justly introduced to resource consents when they will be reviewed progressively?
 - b) How long is this likely to take and can we see ways to speed this up?
 - c) What are the options if the Land and Water Plan is not finalised by 2025?
6. Given the agreed conference position on the need for efficient and timely transition from the current state of regional allocation, should the Court require, I remain of the view that further expert conferencing around such practical aspects of implementation could be helpful.