

RE: **Te Mana o te Wai – Annual Plan Submission**

I recently forwarded a submission regarding Council's support for the National Policy Statement (NPS) on Freshwater Management. It was subsequently apparent that I was not totally cognisant of some matters in respect of this project / cultural "initiative". Further comments (and a revised recommendation) are therefore set out below.

My previous understanding was that Council (MDC) had tentatively agreed (subject to annual plan hearing) to provide \$150,000 over three years.

The correct situation is that **\$125,000** is requested for "additional costs", and **\$50,000** for "building capacity and capability", both over three years. Comments on the method of funding are provided later.

I also previously assumed that the NPS was mandatory for all Councils, but was later informed that MDC's support is "conditional" upon Nelson and Tasman Council's implementation as well. In other words, MDC can opt to NOT fund this project.

Further research revealed that the "NPS for Indigenous Biodiversity" (under the RMA) was developed by the Ministry for the Environment and the Department of Conservation. However, the website states **"This regulation is not finalised or in effect"**. That being the case, why is Council proceeding on this, and secondly (as spelt out in my original submission), **why isn't it being funded by central government through those departments?**

Casual observation would suggest that the input in developing and implementing this project (not to mention the cost) will likely increase our greenhouse gas emissions by at least the equivalent of a dozen or so dairy farms, also that **the NPS is more about politics than environmental outcomes.**

MDC declines funding to many far more worthy projects, an example being the recently opened Awatere ECE Hub in Seddon, this being a much needed community facility. Council didn't even provide a "discount" on its levies (Resource, Building Consents, etc). It has been suggested to me that this might have been because the Hub was on Education Ministry land. What nonsense. MDC have supported (and rightly so) the Omaka Aviation Heritage Centre, it being on leased land (Corlette Family Trust).

I would also mention that the Ministry for Culture and Heritage is doling out large amounts of taxpayer money on not dissimilar projects (as previously mentioned, subject is a cultural "initiative"), ie the Kauae Raro Research Collective has recently been granted \$248,460 "to commission and promote new works by Maori creatives using customary Maori paint making knowledge". Pouna Wai has received \$124,631 "to produce Pouna Wai / A Digital River – an interactive, real-time large-scale digital art installation of the Whanganui River, embedded in Maori kaupapa." Maoriland Charitable Trust has received \$1,015,300 "to deliver Purita, a capability system to enable identification and development of Maori potential through the creation of content...also platform an extensive library of global indigenous content".

This begs another question, if central government won't fund (through one of its numerous entities) the implementation of the NPS, why should ratepayers, especially as MDC claims to not have the financial capacity to support other (more worthwhile) projects.

It is appreciated that \$175,000 is not a great amount in the overall scheme of things, however it's reasonable to assume that having supported subject "initiative", there will be ongoing requests (to "top of the south" Councils) from Te Taihū iwi in the future. I again repeat, they should approach central government, and not expect ratepayers to front up.

The argument that part (or all) of the requested funding is coming from Reserves is irrelevant. As previously stated, there are far better ways to use this fund, and moderate future rate increases.

MDC's published information on "Proposed new projects" states that "the rating impact of these proposals has been reduced to zero through the **possible use** of \$1.36 million of the \$23 million Three Waters well-being funding that the government announced in July 2021, subject to it being on acceptable terms to Council". I trust you are aware that Councils who take this bribe "must not at any time do anything which could have an adverse effect on the reputation, good standing or goodwill of the Department of Internal Affairs or the Government".

In other words, MDC needs to totally roll over on "Three Waters" for this to happen and it would appear it is already contemplating doing so. The implications are concerning however I will leave that discussion for another day.

As MDC's initial (and unwise) response (to iwi) makes it difficult to then opt out (I also assumed the NPS was mandatory), I previously recommended that the project be for only two years, and MDC's contribution limited to \$100,000. Given the factors mentioned above, I now consider **the application should be declined**. I appreciate Te Taihū iwi would be highly disappointed with this, however funding was always subject to the previously stated conditions. They should give the Ministry for Culture and Heritage a call.

I have the feeling New Zealand has some difficult times ahead. One would consequently hope that both central and local government will think twice before continuing to squander taxpayer/ratepayer money on frivolous ideological "initiatives".

Lindsay Newdick

If you hold a cat by the tail you learn things that cannot be learned in any other way.

Mark Twain (1835 - 1910)