

Hearing – 21st November 2017

My name is Leo Vollebregt. I am chairman of the Wairarapa Water User's Incorporated Society.

The Society was formed in October 2011 so that our members could have a voice in regional discussions on water, particularly through the Regional Plan and Water Wairarapa.

We have been involved in Regional Plan discussions since late 2011, an involvement we have greatly appreciated. These discussions have required a huge amount of time, energy and kms by the core group of our Executive who have committed to the task of putting forward the views of those who use water for productive ends.

Our members include dairyfarmers, sheep and beef farmers, croppers, vineyards, horticulturalists and some processing industry. Irrigation is the main use of water and great food and drink is produced for the Wairarapa and beyond.

Irrigation in the Wairarapa started in earnest in the 1960s when farmers and horticulturalists started applying water to combat the disastrous effects of drought. Early systems were aluminium pipes with sprinklers which were shifted by hand. It was very hard work and meant they did not leave the farm very often during the summer but the result was that stock were fed, crops grew and production of food started to become reliable.

The irrigation types now include centre pivots, big guns, K-Lines, fixed grid, long laterals, drip and soak lines. The technology used has

changed as advances are discovered and as irrigators needs have changed. Irrigating is not cheap and this drives changes to systems that deliver more per litre or per \$ spent. Another driver to change is better knowledge of what good use of water can do for production. No longer do dairyfarmers irrigate to keep the grass green, crops alive or to get through a drought. Wise use of water can deliver really good food growth in sunny weather. Water and sunshine grows a lot of energy.

Irrigation systems are engineer designed and their performance is monitored

There is very little of the plant and stock wastage that you may see in drought vulnerable areas so while prices may vary at least production does not.

Milksolids production on a well irrigated dairy farm in the Wairarapa will vary as little as 1-3% from season to season due to the reliability of water.

Crop farmers can secure valuable contracts if they can assure the seed supplier that the plants will be well looked after, i.e. they are able to irrigate during the summer.

A farm that produces more spends more and employs more people, on farm. The additional spending off farm leads to more employment off farm. A typical dairy farm spends 50% of its income in running costs, no matter where its income level sits.

The use of water for irrigation has improved the reliability of food production and the incomes of farmers and of those who support these farmers but more importantly it has improved the general health and wellbeing of rural communities. It is very stressful not being able to feed animals or crops or to have uncertain income.

In 1984 I purchased my farm. It did not have irrigation. The rain stopped in November and the drought didn't break until the

following May. My former employer gave me a stack of silage, my father shared some of his winter feed, I grazed the roadside. The cows were dry in March. Lucky I was single and could live on the smell of an oily rag! The following year I had irrigation.

The main aim of our work in regards to the PNRP is to ensure that our members continue to have the reliable source of water that was made available to them after they first applied for it and had its availability assessed.

Irrigators and their professional advisors along with the Regional Council and its predecessor the Wairarapa Catchment Board assessed the availability of water in the aquifers and rivers near their properties and applied to use some and subsequently tested the effects of abstraction before allocation occurred.

Farmers see the benefits of their water use very directly. They also see directly any impacts on river flow and aquifer levels. Over allocation is considered carefully because too many people drawing off the same source will affect the other users.

The effects of restrictions are keenly observed also. When a large percentage of the Wairarapa users are told to turn off their irrigation between 7am and 7pm during times of restriction because they are directly connected, they expect to see a change in surface flow. This is not being observed.

The Wairarapa Groundwater Model is acknowledged to be a blunt instrument but its boundaries are defended to the hilt! The model's features are not always what is seen in the field. Water users together with the regional council need the ability to refine the model without excessive cost and unreasonable hoops to jump through. We want the model to be fair.

The model needs to be underpinned by robust science and evidence. If we are required to turn off takes to achieve a certain result then that result should be obvious.

GW needs the best possible information to fairly and accurately allocate water for users and the environment needs. The information needs to be efficiently gathered, accurate and up to date.

We expect to see the water resource used optimally.

A simple, clear set of rules and procedures for using and sharing water is desired. To have to spend tens of thousands of dollars to get consent to use water is not fair.

Farmers are community members who live close to the rivers and streams and who live in communities who draw water from underground for domestic use. They are vitally interested in these sources of water staying healthy for their needs and enjoyment. They are also keen that the abundant water that flows through the valley is utilised so that the rural community can be a productive and vital place to live and work in. What the rural people see, feel and know about the environment and community they live in is valid.

It's a bit like running a factory from an office down the road. Sometimes you've got to go to the factory to see the product, the workers and what needs doing to the factory.

We want rural Wairarapa to be a good place to live and work in, a place where our children may also want to be. Good land and water, vital and prosperous.

Leo Vollebregt

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