

FEEDBACK ON: WHAT'S OUR FUTURE CANTERBURY?

To: Environment Canterbury

Name of submitter: MHV Water Limited

Contact person: Melanie Brooks
Chief Executive Officer

Address for service: MHV Water Limited
326 Burnett Street
Ashburton 7700

Mobile: 0274356882

Email: mel@mhvwater.nz

MHV Water owns the infrastructure to store and deliver water for the purpose of irrigation, stockwater and environmental flows. We are a co-operative where our Shareholders utilise irrigation water for arable, sheep and beef, dairy, and dairy support farming systems, over an area of approximately 58,000 ha in the Hekeao Hinds Plains of Mid Canterbury. The discharge of nutrients from MHV Water shareholder Properties and the environmental education programme has been managed collectively since 2014, and the consent was renewed in 2021. We are passionate about supporting our farmer shareholders to continue to achieve improved environmental outcomes and work closely with other stakeholders in the Hekeao Hinds and Mid Canterbury as a whole.

Introduction

- 1 This feedback from MHV Water reflects our engagement in the both the Mid-Canterbury Community Engagement and the Trial Working Group with Aoraki Environmental Consultancy Limited on behalf of Te Rūnanga of Arowhenua and which includes representatives from Environment Canterbury, Federated Farmers, Mid Canterbury Catchment Collective, Barrhill Chertsey Irrigation Limited, Ashburton Lyndhurst Irrigation, Rangitata Diversion Race Management Limited and MHV Water.
- 2 We would like the RPS and subsequent planning processes to enable improved environmental outcomes. We firmly believe taking the time for partners and stakeholders to engage, agree and identify the points of disagreement at the front end of all planning processes will reduce time and cost at the back end of these processes, and most importantly, reduce extended periods of uncertainty which is without doubt a derailer of change on the ground.
- 3 The high level principles that were agreed, without prejudice, at the Trial Working Group were:-
 - 3.1 We should be starting with the watershed;
 - 3.2 The plains are interconnected;
 - 3.3 The land and people of our community are sustained by the rivers; and
 - 3.4 That each river has its' own mana, whakapapa and values.

- 4 We are totally supportive of the collective outcomes from both streams of the Trial Working Group and Mid-Canterbury Community Engagement mahi (work), including the Environmental, Cultural, Social and Economic considerations proposed, which are attached for reference. It is important to note that whilst the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020 (NPS-FM20) has a hierarchy prioritising the health and well-being of water bodies, it is important to note (as reflected in the Mid-Canterbury Community submission) that the hierarchy does not exist in isolation. As stated in part 1.3(1), a balance must be achieved between the water, the wider environment and the community.
- 5 The following submission from MHV Water is intended to provide additional and supporting points to the Mid-Canterbury Community submission.

Principles for establishing the Vision

- 6 In setting the Vision, as stated in paragraph 5. we are supportive of the Principles created by the Mid Canterbury Community Engagement, and would like to reinforce a number of key points.
- 7 The Vision to be created by the community and mana whenua.
As per NPS FM-20 part 3.3(3)a the Vision must be created with engagement with the community and tangata whenua, and b, be informed by an understanding of the history of and environmental pressures on the FMU. We wholly in support of this principle because for the community to buy into the Vision they need to see their future in the Vision, and they will also need to see the work that they have done to date recognised in the history. This will create buy in and ensure that improved outcomes across social, cultural, environmental and economic.
- 8 An aspirational Vision has its place, but the actual achievement of the vision will take patience and persistence. Farm system changes and refinement takes time. The Tasman District Council contemplates a 100 year timeline to achieve their Vision and we are supportive of a similar approach with realistic milestones required along the timeline.
- 9 In Canterbury we are not starting from scratch. The framework created under the Canterbury Water Management Strategy (2009) was created with extensive community engagement and the operative sub regional plans included considerable investments in time, cost and goodwill by ECan and the community. We have an operative sub regional plan in the Hekeao Hinds Plains, plan change 2, and the first of the milestone reductions is due in 2025, followed by 2030 and 2035. The community have bought into the journey and we would like to see further changes complimenting the framework and rules that are already in place.
- 10 Reliable water supplies (for both community water supply and commercial use such as irrigation), as envisaged in the Canterbury Water Management Strategy, is a key component in building resilience to the climate change scenario, and to drive improved environmental outcomes for Canterbury. Without reliable water supply land use change is hamstrung.

Principles for establishing the Freshwater Management Units (FMUs)

- 11 Water is the life force that makes the Mid Canterbury community viable. We are interconnected at every level (urban and rural) and the water must be connected to the community and land that it provides for.
- 12 Every river has its own life force. We would like to see that recognised and managed within the larger FMU.
- 13 We aspire to generational goals which will require patience and persistence to achieve. The timeline for achieving our goals needs to reflect multiple factors, including:-
 - 13.1 Recognition that it takes time for changes to actions to flow through to changes to outcomes;
 - 13.2 Different solutions will be required to solve for different issues in different parts of the FMU;
 - 13.3 The ability (capability and capacity) to change farm systems and land use, ie financial resources;
 - 13.4 Impact to communities;
 - 13.5 Restoration opportunities and what preserving our ecosystem looks like in practice;
 - 13.6 Infrastructure resilience including capacity and capability; and
 - 13.7 Milestones for achievement over a longer time frame to keep us on track.
- 14 We must have pragmatic management for land and water bodies that border different FMU or that are in two FMUs.
- 15 Reliable water is the key to food production, food security, and a strong and resilient Mid Canterbury community. The Vision statements for each of the water bodies must recognise the vital role that the water bodies play for our communities, regardless of if the water bodies are included in the same FMU. In Mid Canterbury the water and land is all interconnected both above the ground and below the ground, this must be recognised in the Vision statements.

Climate Change Considerations

- 16 In Mid Canterbury we are well placed to adapt to climate change. [Climate Change Projections for the Canterbury Region](#) suggest we will see increased winter rainfall, instances of drought, and average temperatures. This provides an opportunity for land use change where reliable water is available. Reliable water supply requires water storage, as such water storage infrastructure will be critical to be able to enable improving water quality outcomes and the ability to adapt to climate change opportunities as well as providing the community improved resilience more broadly.

Summary

- 17 MHV Water are fully supportive of the Mid Canterbury Community Submission, attached, and whilst we have identified a number of key points in our submission, the main one would be the importance of having community buy in to drive real and sustainable change. In all our discussions with the community everyone wants to see a thriving environment, but regulatory fatigue is very real.

- 18 ECan must engage with the community and the community must be able to see their future in the visions. If it is going to take time to engage, then the time must be taken. Please do not force through change at the expense of genuine engagement as we will not see the improvements in the environment that we all want to see.
- 19 We thank ECan for the opportunity to provide feedback, and the mahi that has been done by the ECan team to date and we look forward to continuing to work with you in this process.

Melanie Brooks on behalf of MHV Water

Our Mid Canterbury Vision

Mid Canterbury's intergenerational vision is for a thriving and resilient community who are environmentally responsible, culturally respectful, economically viable and socially cohesive, recognising these aspirations are interdependent on one another and underpinned by water.

Our Foundations: Environmental, Cultural, Social and Economic

Environmental

Through responsible stewardship and sustainable practices, we will preserve and enhance the health of our water, land, biodiversity and ecosystems to ensure they remain a source of life, prosperity and wellbeing for generations to come.

1. **Healthy State of the Environment:** Rivers are healthy, swimmable, and abundant with life. Aquatic ecosystems flourish, people can enjoy the amenity and recreational value of the environment and mahinga kai opportunities.
2. **Management of Natural Resources:** Ensuring that natural resources are managed in a way that preserves the health and integrity of existing ecosystems, protecting flora and fauna and maintaining the ecological balance, while still providing for the viability of the community. The community's management and use of natural resources needs to reflect the need for flexibility over time and the interconnected nature of the resources.
3. **Sustainability:** The sustainability principle aims to ensure that human activities are conducted in a manner that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Humans have an interdependent relationship with natural resources, we depend on them to thrive, they depend on us to thrive. It involves adopting practices that are environmentally responsible, socially equitable and economically viable over the long term.
4. **Climate Change:** Natural resources are managed to adapt and optimise outcomes in the face of a changing and more variable climate, and natural hazards are managed for the protection of our community.
5. **Ambitious and achievable targets:** These foundations highlight the importance of long-term knowledge to guide practical management, community involvement, and decision-making. Our community is conscious of all costs and trade-offs, and clear regulations in achieving sustainable water and soil management and environmental conservation, recognising human habitation and the delays between catchment action and evidence of this in the environment.

Cultural

These key foundations reflect a desire for an inclusive, respectful and diverse community for all cultures, respecting the bi-cultural relationship with mana whenua, and the role of Te tiriti in promoting unity for common and shared outcomes now and for generations to come.

1. **Striving for an inclusive Community:** Our vision is to foster a united and inclusive community.
2. **Growing Understanding and Respect:** We envision a future where there is an opportunity for all cultures to develop a deeper understanding of each other's values and aspirations. By encouraging transparent and respectful relationships, we aim to navigate differences and collaborate toward shared goals for a sustainable and prosperous community.

Social

This foundation includes a diverse and thriving community that is socially cohesive. We prioritise health and education, safe environments, and strong infrastructure to create opportunities, stability and support our families and businesses.

1. **Health and Well-being:** Healthy communities are underpinned by a healthy environment. They enable the physical and mental health of all community members to be met.
2. **Strong, Safe Community:** Close-knit, engaged, inter-generational, collaborative communities, with strong identities where safety and security is paramount. Supporting local families, schools and community amenities underpins our social fabric.
3. **Interdependence within our community:** Our strong and thriving business and urban community is driven and supported by a strong and viable rural and farming economy.
4. **Quality Infrastructure and amenities:** The desire for well-maintained roads, bridges, civic centres, schools, communication networks, water delivery, energy, flood infrastructure, sports and cultural facilities to support Mid Canterbury residents and visitors to our district.
5. **Local Control and Decision-Making:** The preference for community-led decision-making to give certainty and balance between necessary regulations and the ability to change, innovate and deliver on the community's long term collective vision.

Economic

These key foundations reflect the desire for a prosperous, sustainable and adaptable community that maintains economic viability while caring for the environment and future generations.

1. **Economic Viability and Resilience:** Creating a diverse and profitable economy while ensuring generational environmental, social, and cultural resilience. Interlinked urban, rural and farming businesses create local employment and education opportunities.
2. **Critical Infrastructure:** Our strong economy has been founded on generational investment in critical infrastructure. The future resilience and prosperity of Mid Canterbury will be determined by continued investment in significant infrastructure at regional, local and business levels.
3. **Regulatory Certainty and Flexibility:** Seeking stable and clear regulatory regimes with long-term certainty to enable planning and investment, while also allowing flexibility for businesses and the community to adapt and diversify. Progress towards goals at a pace that optimises the time to adapt our use of resources, ensuring that no part of the community is disadvantaged or pays a disproportionate cost
4. **Primary Production:** Food and fibre production underpins the economic prosperity and social cohesion of our community, supported by access to reliable water, natural resources and resilient infrastructure.
5. **Community Collaboration and Empowerment:** Recognising the importance of collaboration between decision makers, stakeholders and strategic partners. Regionally relevant and well researched information is critical in ensuring our whole community has a say in the use of resources and local development.

These principles and the overarching vision have been formed following extensive engagement with the Mid Canterbury community. We have held 29 sessions in halls, living rooms, businesses and meeting places across Mid Canterbury. 622 members of our community have taken the time to provide their views and then a working group of rural and urban leaders have worked together to ensure that the outputs genuinely reflect the feedback that was received, which has then been circulated back to the community for further feedback prior to finalisation of the draft.