

Submission on 21.23.5 Maungawera Valley PA RCL Schedule, 11:15am, 7 November 2023

Mylrea Bell

Commissioners, Presenters, Planners, Interested and Affected Persons
Tēnā koutou Tēnā koutou Tēnā koutou katao

I am Mylrea Bell. I have visited Wanaka all of my life, I have lived permanently in Wanaka for over 40 years, and I am a 30 year resident of the Maungawera Valley. I am highly respectful of the area – the fauna, the flora, the landscape, the people, the wairua.

Today, I will read my submission and speak to points within it, and I will forward my presentation and newspaper article to you tonight. (*My written submission, as read today, is shown below in blue italics, other info presented today is in black.*)

I oppose the introduction of the 21.23.5 Maungawera Valley PA RCL. The current Rural General rules are workable, practical, sympathetic to the environment and heritage, and will provide sufficient landscape and economic protection into the future as they currently exist.

I apologise, the first paragraph of my submission is a little snappy – I think I was quite shocked to see the emotive language used in the supposedly formal and neutral document.

I find your '21.23Schedule of Landscape Values: Upper Clutha Rural Character Landscape Priority Areas' to be an emotive, subjective and highly interpretative document that reads like a poorly written novel, existing of cut and pastes and with significant inaccurate information.

Very occasionally I am a writer, but even if I was writing fiction I would question some of the phrases in the 21.23.5 document, such as:

“somewhat compromise the pleasantness”, “dramatic”, sublime”, tranquil”, “aesthetic”. However, when the document says something factual like working farm, it is written with inverted commas ie “working farm” “. Also the document states, “Dwellings are set back from Maungawera Road and are not visually prominent from the road” – probably half of the houses in the valley are actually sited very near Maungawera Road; also the landscape is described as having “kanuka-lined stream courses” whereas in reality the kanuka grows across the hills as bush – it is not just beside the streams.

I think my overall objection to the document is that it overlooks the fact that the Maungawera Valley is an existing rural residential farming area, largely unseen by the public whether from low or high vantage points, that is surrounded by outstanding landscape and features. The rural valley floor is not the 'outstanding feature'

I feel we will suffer in our desired lifestyles from being in this position ie in theory, we are being reviewed under RCL Rural Character Landscapes, but this is blended with, and we are sandwiched by, ONF Outstanding Natural Features and ONL Outstanding Natural Landscapes.

I checked the meaning of 'rural' yesterday. First up on Google was a definition from the Oxford Dictionary: “Rural - relating to or characteristic of the country or the people who live there”. Exactly – 'rural' is the land and the people! Even the 21.23.5 Maungawera Valley PA RCL Schedule states on Page 3, 19: “Views have a strong 'working farm' rural character, with most rural living obscured by topography or vegetation”; and Page 23: “Memorable to residents and locals as an enclosed valley with

a strong rural character". We don't just say 'landscape', we say 'rural' because it also encompasses people.

In general, the soils of the Wanaka region are poor and shallow. In contrast, the flat land of the Maungawera Valley possesses some of the highest quality and depth of soil in the region. There is potential in this valley for successful horticulture and agriculture that is sympathetic to the social, cultural and environmental values of the region. It is not for us at this present point in time to say this is the point at which everything must remain forever frozen – land use is an evolving activity, practices change and improve, and it is important that we continue to develop, which has happened under the existing ruling. For example, if Mt Maude Vineyard was not already in operation it is unlikely that it would be able to gain approval to set up under the proposed new legislation. I, and other residents in the valley, want restrictions on land use (as we have currently) and we want to preserve the character of the valley, but the proposed Schedule of Landscape Values is unworkable.

I will read to you from an article I found six weeks ago, in the 'Farmers Weekly' newspaper, 25 September 2023. It talks about where we are at with farming, and where we could be. It is written to both Hipkins and Luxon, just prior to the national election – please refer to attached newspaper article, called "Dear Chris". (Mylrea then read the article by Ben Anderson, a Hawke's Bay farmer)

*The Maungawera Valley floor (which includes the slopes of the low lying Mt Brown) is an **established and modified** farming area, which has been developed over generations in a manner sympathetic to the rural and wider environment. Those living in the Valley are very conscious of their responsibilities as guardians of this whenua, and there is high respect for the wairua of the area, creating the rural character and community that exists today. This has been successfully achieved through using the existing rules for Rural General in the Queenstown Lakes District Plan.*

I have lived as a permanent resident on a small holding in the Maungawera Valley for around 30 years. I note from the list of submitters that a number of presenters are 'Experts'. Although I am not presenting today as an expert, I feel I am a type of expert at living in the Maungawera Valley.

This community is made up of hardworking, often multi-generational, families who generally come from a strong rural background with an affinity for the whenua. It is unlikely that over time the 'locals' will be able to remain in the area with highly prescriptive rulings. While recognising the land must be protected we also recognise that it must be economic. I do not want land ownership in the valley to become accessible only to high net worth overseas investors, as has happened in other area of Wanaka. A farmer does not buy land to sit and look at it, a farmer buys land to respect and work it. My ideal is that our family can become multi-generational custodians of this land, and to do so we will at times require some flexibility in the use of the land. I have been involved with economic development and tertiary business management courses in Wanaka since 1991 and I have seen the benefits to a community of innovation and entrepreneurial thinking.

If you live in the Wanaka area, or if you are visiting, have you been to a wedding or event at Lookout Lodge? Have you had a drink of a Mt Maude wine*, or are you aware of their international recognition? Have you had a venison steak at a Mt Burke Field Day?

Andy, my long term partner and I have two sons. One son has a Bachelor of Commerce in Agriculture and he wishes to use it here. The other is a successful international filmmaker/videographer, and also talented industrial designer – he also wishes to base himself here. Could they afford to buy or build in the Wanaka area? No, not with an average house price of \$1.4m and rising, it will be impossible. Will they be allowed to build on our family land? Probably not under the proposed rulings. I agree that land must be protected, but at the same time the situation must be economic.

I do not want international buyers pushing out local families and individuals whose lives are entwined in the area. We, as local existing landowners, need an economic base to cover our costs eg fencing, rates, insurance, seed, etc – and let's not overlook the goal of actually making a profit from our work if we can. Traditional farming such as raising sheep for meat is just not sufficient.

I spoke with a high country farmer yesterday and I said that it is becoming harder for farming to be economic, that it only really could be economic if the farm was of a significant size. She replied that even their large high country station needs to diversify to survive, and that is why they have pursued alternative land uses over the past few years.

So let's hope that we can retain our innovation and that we are not restrained by over regulation.

To finish off, with apologies to Julia Roberts and Hugh Grant: 'I am just a resident standing in front of the Council and commissioners, asking you to let myself and my family continue living in the Maungawera Valley'.

Thank you for your time, and thank you for the opportunity to present.

Mylrea Bell
227 Maungawera Rd
Wanaka 9382
034431738
0274439942

* Update: I found out tonight that Mt Maude Vineyard's Sarah-Kate and Dan Dineen won Winemaker of the Show, and Maude brought home the Heritage Rosebowl for the second year in a row, as well as a trophy for the 2023 East Block Riesling at the current 2023 National Wine Awards NZ. World famous in Maungawera.

Dear Chris ...

Eating the elephant



Ben Anderson

Ben Anderson lives in central Hawke's Bay and farms deer, cows and trees. eating.the.elephant.nz@gmail.com

I WONDER if, by any chance, you have read any Barry Crump? When I was a boy growing up in the King

Country his books were my well-thumbed favourites, A Good Keen Man especially.

In one of the books, and I can't for the life of me remember which, Barry tells a story about getting off a train after a long time in the bush, and there, sitting on the platform, tied to a pole, is a dog jealously guarding a pile of old worn-out hunting gear. Barry makes the observation that both dog and gear must have belonged to a deer culler, because only a deer-culler's dog would think such a pile of gear could be worth protecting.

There are parallels here with farming, Chris, and that's what

I wanted to have a chat to you about.

It is easy to be sentimental about what we do here on the land. Like the images Barry Crump's books created in my mind, just as vivid are those from a childhood spent on isolated hill country. Mustering stock by horseback, cutting scrub, the long days docking and even the billy tea at smoko when out fencing, are memories I wouldn't change for the world.

But I also know that my father shielded me from forming the other memories. Memories of financial hardship, letting the house insurance lapse, and wondering if the bank would make this season our last. These are the memories that farmers would like to forget, but can't, because they repeat like clockwork.

As we've touched on before, our industry is not much of an economic performer, or at least not for those who actually farm. Our all farm types average return on capital is 2.5%. If you were a fund manager providing this level of return to your clients, you wouldn't last beyond the first performance review.

And yet those that represent our industry to our government seem hellbent on maintaining the status quo.

Chris, what I am trying to say is that farming needs some fresh leadership. It badly needs the type of transformation that can only come from completely rethinking how we farm, what we sell and how we sell it.

I understand that politicians will often take their cues from



IN THE HEAT OF BATTLE: Chris Hipkins and Chris Luxon go head to head in the first leaders debate last week. Ben Anderson says farming needs fresh leadership that can only come from rethinking how we farm, what we sell and how we sell it.

the loud and established voices. Voices that present themselves as representatives of the whole.

But for the most part these voices are from the status quo. They are experienced in the past and want to see it continue. These are voices that have relied on capital gains as the basis of their business model, have pushed productivity over value creation and seek to sell commodities instead of products.

These voices have overseen environmental degradation, a loss of social licence, the consolidation of farmland and the loss of rural communities. They have driven talented young farmers to leave

“ *This election provides an opportunity to really kick on with agriculture and grab a bigger slice of the value chain.* ”

the industry, and even the country, because the numbers no longer stack up. And again, all for the princely average return of 2.5%.

And this is bad for you Chris, because the country misses out on all that potential GDP. Revenue that is currently captured by those countries that import our raw commodities, add value to them

and, in the worst cases, sell them back to us.

We need a fresh approach, and we need fresh people to drive it. This election provides an opportunity to really kick on with agriculture and grab a bigger slice of the value chain.

Once this election is over, let's form a new agriculture advisory group.

But let's not rearrange the deck chairs and fill it with the same old voices who will give both you and me the same old thing. Let's fill it with disrupters.

Let's fill it with the very best marketers, brand developers and food technologists out there. And most importantly, let's put people in there with a track record of creating valuable products and successfully selling them to the world.

To help with this Chris, let's rethink our trade policy. Let's stop focusing on creating access for commodity products and start creating access for brands. Perhaps you could consider focusing as much effort on incentives as we currently do on regulation?

Perhaps you could promote the development of additional processing capacity in New Zealand.

Perhaps you could further accelerate entrepreneurial activity in the country and help develop a whole new range of brands that take full advantage of the latent potential of our first-class food, fibre and timber outputs.

Chris, there is so much potential for our sector out there. I get excited just thinking about it! But please let's stop listening to the old deer-cullers' dogs. Give them a pat and leave them to lay in the sun. It's time to kick on.

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