

**IN THE MATTER** of the Resource Management Act 1991

AND

**IN THE MATTER** of the proposed private Plan Change 113 (Ruakaka Racecourse) to the Whangarei District Plan

### **STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF GARY DEAN LOGAN**

#### **1. Introduction**

1.1 My name is Dean Logan. I am the President of the Whangarei Racing Club Incorporated ("WRC"). I have been a WRC Committee Member for a period of 23 years, serving 9 of those years as Club President. I have been involved in horse racing for over 35 years and I am a registered licenced trainer based at Ruakaka.

#### **2. Whangarei Racing Club Structure and Operations**

2.1 The WRC has 262 financial members. It is governed by a volunteer Committee of 10 members. We have a staff of four (1 full-time, 3 part-time), plus casuals employed to assist on and around race days.

2.2 The WRC was established in 1920 and is a non-profit incorporated society, with its objects being to hold and conduct race meetings and to promote, regulate and assist the sport of horse racing; and includes aiding other sporting, benevolent, charitable, national or other public organisations in the locality.

2.3 WRC conducted its first race meeting at Ruakaka race course in 1976, after previously being located on the site now known as

“Kensington Park”, the main sporting and recreational facility in Whangarei city.

- 2.4 Ruakaka race course is the best natural winter racing surface in New Zealand, and provides a year-round racing and training facility.
- 2.5 Currently the WRC conducts 11 race meetings per year, and holds one or two trials meetings at Ruakaka. As well as conducting race meetings the WRC is a training centre, with 15 local trainers and over 130 horses using Ruakaka training facilities.
- 2.6 The Northland Harness Racing Club also races at Ruakaka race course (1 meeting per year) and several harness race horses are trained at the venue.
- 2.7 The nearby Ruakaka beach provides an additional training surface, and the WRC has a concession with the Department of Conservation to access the beach at a set fenced access point.
- 2.8 Ruakaka Race Course is currently ranked 13<sup>th</sup> on the list of venues of strategic importance to the racing industry (out of 52 nationally), primarily due to the quality of the racing surface in winter.
- 2.9 Each year the New Zealand Thoroughbred Racing Board engages Turf Tech to carry out an audit of race courses throughout New Zealand. This year’s results have once again independently confirmed our rating as the best winter racing surface in New Zealand, with a near ideal sand profile.
- 2.10 Whilst our race track is rated highly, our facilities are not. The buildings, comprising a large grandstand complex, administration buildings, caretakers shed and horse barns are now approximately 40 years old, and in need of substantial maintenance and refurbishment.

- 2.11 The financial position of the WRC, in particular its limited revenue, does not allow for funds to be available to carry out this work. The income from racing and training operations does not cover our overheads, and we currently rely on community grants to make ends meet.
- 2.12 Our income streams from holding race meetings, are a venue fee from which we must pay all of the costs of running the race meeting, and a commission percentage of betting turnover on-course. The New Zealand Racing Board operates the TAB and collects all betting revenue. Other WRC revenue comes from sponsorship and training fees.
- 2.13 Corporate and private functions such as weddings, funerals, reunions and corporate team building have been held at Ruakaka Race Course, however due to the current standard of facilities we are unable to further promote this as an income stream.
- 2.14 Whilst the racing industry will assist to some extent with infrastructure projects directly related to racing, it does not have funds to assist with other requirements.
- 2.15 The WRC realises that the reality is the Club must establish other means of income, or eventually face closure.
- 2.16 This application is the result of many years of strategic planning by the WRC and started with a submission made to the Ruakaka-Marsden Point Structure Plan in 2008.

### **3. Social and economic benefits of the Ruakaka Race Course**

- 3.1 The economic benefits to the local economy from employment and utilisation of local businesses by the racing and training operations at Ruakaka venue are significant.



- 3.2 Local trainers and staff directly employed at the venue number approximately 60. Numerous associated contractors such as Farriers, Vets, Horse Transport and Feed Truck drivers obtain work directly from the venue.
- 3.3 Local businesses such as the accommodation providers, food and beverage outlets and petrol stations are supported by the year-round operation of the Ruakaka Race Course, and boosted substantially when we race. Over 20,000 visitors attend the races at Ruakaka in a year.
- 3.4 The fact we race in winter provides valuable turnover to local Ruakaka and Whangarei businesses in the traditionally quiet (non-tourist) season.
- 3.5 Most of the staff working on race day are doing so as volunteers to raise money for their particular charity groups. For example Mid-western Lions provide bar staff, local school pta's, swimming and dance groups provide the gate and door staff - earning their community groups valued fundraising income.
- 3.6 WRC holds a charity race meeting every year in conjunction with Lions International, the latest raising funds (approximately \$20,000) for Riding for Disabled in Whangarei.
- 3.7 The One Tree Point Pony Club is based at the Ruakaka Race Course and uses our land for their grounds at no charge. Other equine groups such as the New Zealand and Northland Miniature Horse Associations and Northland Arabian Horse Club use our grounds for their annual shows.
- 3.8 Other community groups who have used our facilities at no charge include Bream Bay College, Ruakaka Fire Service, Northland

Regional Council, New Zealand Police, Pulse Dance Group and the Ruakaka Economic Development Group.

3.9 The Racing Industry is one in which the potential to employ low skilled workers still exists. Over the years being involved in the industry as an employer and at governance level I have seen numerous cases where youth who may have struggled academically, have excelled when working with horses. The skills they learn in a racing stable allow them at worst to obtain employment in many countries worldwide, and at best, become internationally recognised horse people in many areas in the equine industry.

3.10 Over the years we have been asked to speak at local schools and also to give work experience to students some of which may be classified as "at risk students". I have seen cases where these people have developed in to being our most dedicated and competent workers.

#### **4. Commitment of the WRC**

4.1 The purpose of applying for this Plan Change is to try to secure the future of racing and training at Ruakaka in the long-term. The "Ruakaka Equine Environment" would provide the means to gain some financial sustainability for WRC in the future by allowing for other compatible income-generating activities to be established alongside the race course.

4.2 This site is the only viable location for the race course. Relocating is not an option. Our existence relies on the success of our unique track as a winter racing surface – the sand base being the crucial element.

4.3 The industry has indicated it wishes to utilise Ruakaka race course more in the future, and the recent track expansion project, which

they have helped fund, is an indication of their commitment to continue racing at Ruakaka.

- 4.4 The WRC is committed to retaining an on-going role in all of the activities that may occur on this land. The WRC is not a developer. The income, if any, derived from future activities on this land, will be utilised to carry out our Club operations, maintain our assets and facilities and make improvements to this community facility for the benefit of many.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D Logan', written in a cursive style.

GARY DEAN LOGAN  
25 October 2013