

SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE OF NIKKI SMETHAM FOR QUEENSTOWN PARK LTD

1. My evidence is limited to the identification of the rural character within the Wakatipu Basin area specifically in relation to whether development other than farming is or could be considered appropriate.
2. The PDP focuses on the key values of the rural landscape as being its open character and relies on farming to maintain this. However, in reality the characteristics of the rural landscape vary widely across the District where a wide range of rural activities take place in and around a proliferation of large scale natural features including distinctive glacial landforms, lakes and rivers.
4. Overall, my review of the rural landscape suggests that while there are common generic rural characteristics, as noted by Ms Read¹, in reality the rural landscape character of the QLD is more complex, determined by a unique combination of landform, land cover and land use to convey a range of distinctive places. In their evidence both Ms Pfluger² and Mr Baxter³ recognise that it is the unique rather than generic landscape character that should determine the level of development appropriate to the various rural landscapes within the district. I agree. What may be an important attribute in one rural landscape may not be identified as such in another. It is the identification of these differences in rural character and associated values which will enable development to be assessed in relation to the values for which protection is sought or which must be managed.
5. I have read Ms Read's Summary Statement, paragraphs 1 and 2 and her reports relating to the landscape classification boundaries but find I am not convinced that the landscape classification boundaries reflect the complexities relating to rural character, or identify the quality and specific values associated with the district's rural landscapes. I remain of the opinion that a district wide landscape study would assist in establishing a baseline for consideration of effects of proposed developments.
6. Whether effects are adverse or not depend to a large extent on what is valued and considered appropriate, and the public expectation of what can be reasonably anticipated to occur in the landscape.
7. In my opinion activities other than farming could occur in the rural zone without appreciably changing the existing rural character, quality and more importantly its

¹# S0001 QLDC T02 Read (Statement of Evidence of Marion Read on behalf of QLDC, Landscape, 2016)

² Statement of Evidence of Yvonne Pfluger on behalf of #608, #610, #613, #763, #767, #764

³ Statement of Evidence of Patrick Baxter on behalf of #430, #534, #535, #537, #515, #531

values. My evidence considers that particular types of development may benefit the landscape values associated with the rural landscape and contribute to or enhance "rural character" or "rural amenity" including;

- Increasing recreation access, tourism experience of the natural landscape
- Increased exotic tree planting for rural landscapes (but not necessarily ONLs)
- Increase biodiversity through adding indigenous vegetation for all rural landscapes including ONLs
- Covenanted areas for protection to offset development rights

8. An example of an appropriate activity, other than farming, is the QP Ltd Gondola, proposed as an alternative access to the Remarkables Ski Area and as a tourism activity in its own right. Mr Greenaway's evidence further confirms the development potential of the rural landscape in relation to recreation and tourism with reference to his experience of the Hillend and Parkins Bay (Glendu Station) proposals. These developments are good examples of the type of development I have listed above because they encompass some form of recreational activity, associated facilities, residential accommodation, a comprehensive revegetation programme, and covenanted areas. This confirms that despite a change of character, a range of alternative uses of farm properties may be undertaken while maintaining the rural qualities and values of the landscape.

9. My review of the proposed objectives, policies and assessment matters has led to my opinion that the PDP provisions could be improved by:

- Requiring a district wide, first principles Landscape Study to establish a baseline of the varying and unique range of rural character and rural values within the district, including the identification of the absorption capability of the landscape and / or its sensitivity to change to ensure that the landscape is managed and protected
- Recognising that other activities, such as tourism and commercial recreation may be appropriate in the rural zones rather than exclusively relying on pastoral farming to maintain the rural landscape
- It is important that the PDP recognises that openness isn't necessarily the key value or characteristic of the rural landscape and that it ensures a consistent use of terminology relating to openness.

- The PDP focus on open character restricts the ability of farmers to sustainably develop their rural land and is misguided to the detriment of naturalness and biodiversity. In my view there would be value in addressing the notion of open character values and recognising a hierarchy of values to reduce the tension between openness and naturalness.