

**BEFORE THE QUEENSTOWN LAKES DISTRICT COUNCIL**

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

**AND**

**IN THE MATTER OF**                      Proposed Queenstown Lakes District Plan 2015  
– Part 1 – Hearing Stream 1B - Strategic  
Direction, Urban Development and Landscape -  
Chapters 3, 4 and 6 - appearing on behalf of  
Aurora Energy Limited - Submitter 635 and  
Further Submission 1121)

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**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE BY JOANNE DOWD**

**17 March 2016**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### Qualifications and Experience

- 1.1 My name is Joanne Dowd. I hold a masters degree in Town and Country Planning from The Queens University of Belfast, obtained in 1993. I have been a full member of the UK Royal Town Planning Institute since 1997. I am also a member of the Resource Management Law Association since 2006 and I currently sit on the Otago Branch committee. I am employed as Network Policy Manager with Delta Utility Services Limited (“Delta”). I have been employed in my present position since June 2015 and I have 22 years international planning experience in both the private and public sector.
- 1.2 My experience includes a mix of local authority and consultancy planning and resource management work. In recent years, I have focused on providing consultancy advice with respect to regional and district plans, utility developments, resource consents and environmental management and environmental effects assessments. This includes extensive experience with large-scale projects involving inputs from multidisciplinary teams.
- 1.3 Recent projects in which I have been involved with are set out within **Attachment A** to this evidence.
- 1.4 I confirm that I have read the Code of Conduct for expert witnesses contained in the Environment Court Practice Note and that I agree to comply with it. I confirm that I have considered all the material facts that I am aware of that might alter or detract from the opinions I express. In particular, unless I state otherwise, this evidence is within my scope of expertise and I have not omitted to consider material facts known to me that might alter or detract from the opinions I express.

## 2. OVERVIEW OF SUBMISSION

- 2.1 Aurora Energy Limited (“Aurora”) owns, operates and maintains an electricity distribution network in Dunedin and Central Otago within the Otago region. This network carries electricity from the National Grid to more than 85,000 homes and businesses across Dunedin City and Central Otago Region. Aurora owns substations, lines and cables located in public road reserve, as well as on private property.

- 2.2 The electricity network owned by Aurora comprises high voltage power lines (above and below ground) which distribute electricity to local substations where the voltage is reduced before distribution through standard power lines (overhead and underground) as seen throughout the Otago Region. Aurora's overhead line network extends to 3,889 km of which 513 km are high voltage subtransmission lines up to 66kV. In addition to the distribution network, Aurora has the capacity to own and operate high voltage (up to 110kV) transmission lines, and associated structures, and may be required own such assets as regional electricity demand grows.
- 2.3 Aurora's network covers a number of geographically distinct areas: Dunedin City (which covers the urban areas of Dunedin and Mossgiel, and the inner reaches of the Taieri Plains), Central Otago (stretches from Raes Junction in the south to Lake Wakatipu and Wanaka in the north-west and St Bathans and Makarora in the north-east).
- 2.4 Electricity is a vital resource for New Zealand, its economy and social and cultural wellbeing. The networks owned by Aurora are considered as regionally significant and critical infrastructure and should be recognised as such within the Proposed Queenstown Lakes District Plan 2015 (“**Proposed Plan**”). Given population growth within the District, demand for electricity is increasing and Aurora seeks to secure the ability to meet this demand in the most efficient and cost effective manner. Due to the nature and scale of Auroras' assets, continual upgrade, maintenance and renewal of these assets is required to ensure security of supply of electricity within Otago
- 2.5 The network utility activities undertaken by Aurora are subject to technical, operational and locational constraints and it is important that provision is made within the Proposed Plan to recognise and provide for such constraints while providing opportunities for potential adverse effects of such infrastructure to be avoided, remedied or mitigated. Aurora, therefore, seeks to ensure that its network is adequately provided for within the Proposed Plan such that it is protected from potential adverse effects of other activities, and that the networks' future operation, upgrade, maintenance and renewal are not impeded.

### 3. SUBMISSION POINTS

#### Strategic Directions Chapter Submissions

- 3.1 Aurora lodged a number of submissions on the Strategic Directions Chapter predominantly to ensure that, due to its over-arching nature, appropriate recognition was given to the benefits of network utility infrastructure, in general, and *Regionally Significant Infrastructure*, in particular, and the contribution it makes to the economy of the District.
- 3.2 Aurora submitted that the Chapter should include more enabling provisions for network utility infrastructure and identify infrastructure that is significant within the region including a definition of what constituted *Regionally Significant Infrastructure*.
- 3.3 The Section 42A Report Officer has recommended that the majority of the relief sought by Aurora, in regards to these matters be rejected. However, the Section 42A report does recommend some changes to the chapter which addresses some of the points of relief sought by Aurora, but in a less comprehensive manner than sought.
- 3.4 An overarching concern for Aurora is the proposed definition of *Regionally Significant Infrastructure*, which, (as currently worded), excludes Aurora's distribution network by only referring to *Electricity Transmission Infrastructure*.
- 3.5 Under Clause 3 - "*Interpretation*" of the National Policy Statement on Electricity Transmission 2008, "*Electricity transmission network, electricity transmission and transmission activities ...*" are all determined to mean that they form:

*"part of the national grid of transmission lines and cables ..."*

- 3.6 The *National Grid* is defined as the assets used or owned by Transpower New Zealand Limited ("Transpower"). I note that the proposed definition has been derived by the Section 42A Report Officer from a combination of the wording from Policy 3.5.1 of the Proposed Regional Policy Statement 2015 and modified to reflect submissions made by Transpower. However, both the definition proposed by Transpower and Aurora in original submissions, sought to include "*electricity distribution networks*". There is no justification provided within the

Section 42A report, why electricity distribution networks have been specifically excluded from the recommended definition.

- 3.7 In my view, if a definition of *Regionally Significant Infrastructure* is to be included within the Proposed Plan, then the definition should include provision for electricity distribution which is a critical component of electricity supply. In my opinion, the electricity distribution network is a significant physical resource which is critical in terms of sustaining growth within the district and as such, the Proposed Plan should include provisions to ensure it is managed in the most appropriate way to enable people and communities to provide for their social, economic and cultural wellbeing.
- 3.8 I note that both the Section 42A reports for Strategic Directions and Landscape Chapters include recommendations for amendments to notified provisions, which seek to address shortfalls in the policy framework relating to regionally significant infrastructure. While I support these amendments in general, it is my view that the exclusion of distribution infrastructure from the definition of Regionally Significant Infrastructure has the potential to compound the ability of electricity distribution companies to develop, operate and maintain their networks as no provision has been made for them within either the Strategic Directions or Landscape Chapters. Including "*Electricity Distribution*" within the definition of Regionally Significant Infrastructure will address this issue.
- 3.9 Subject to the above, I make the following further comments on other relevant provisions within the Strategic Directions Chapter. The Section 42A report, recommends changes to Objective 3.2.5.1 (now 3.2.1.6) in order to recognise the necessity and importance of infrastructure in its own right and to provide a comprehensive planning framework.
- 3.10 The recommended changes are generally aligned with the relief sought by Aurora in its original submission, although I note that Aurora lodged a further submission in support of a submission by PowerNet Limited (FS1121.7) which supported the inclusion of the word "*electricity*" within the objective. In my view it is appropriate that provision should be made for electricity within the wording of Objective 3.2.1.6 and should be reworded as follows:

*Maintain and promote the efficient and effective operation, maintenance, development and upgrading of the District's regionally significant*

*infrastructure, including designated airports, key roading, **electricity** and communication technology networks.*

- 3.11 The Section 42A Report Author has also recommended new Policy 3.2.1.7.1 which seeks to:

*Safeguard the efficient and effective operation of regionally significant infrastructure from new incompatible activities.*

- 3.12 The inclusion of such a provision is aligned with the provisions of the Proposed Otago Regional Policy Statement 2015 and in my view is appropriate and I generally supportive of the policy. However, in the event that electricity distribution is not accepted as regionally significant infrastructure, then I consider Policy 3.2.1.7 should read as follows:

*Safeguard the efficient and effective operation of regionally significant **and electricity distribution** infrastructure from new incompatible activities.*

- 3.13 Aurora also sought the inclusion of a new objective and policy to address the fact that the Strategic Directions Chapter did not recognise or provide for the location, technical or operational constraints associated with linear infrastructure networks. Aurora also supported a submission by PowerNet Limited (251.3) which sought to include similar provisions.

- 3.14 The Section 42A report author rejects Aurora's original submission but accepts the further submission (FS1121.9), although I note that no changes have been translated into the proposed provisions. In my view it is appropriate that the technical, operational and locational requirements of network utility infrastructure is recognised and provided for and I support the introduction of provisions as proposed by Aurora or provisions of similar or like effect. However, in the event that "*electricity distribution*" is not accepted as regionally significant infrastructure, then I consider the new objectives and policy should read as follows:

Objective xxx

Recognise that Regionally Significant Infrastructure and **electricity distribution networks** have specific location and technical constraints

Policy xxx

Manage potential effects of Regionally Significant Infrastructure **and electricity distribution networks** on the surrounding environment having regard to the economic benefits and locational, technical and operational requirements of such infrastructure.

## LANDSCAPE CHAPTER

3.15 The submissions made by Aurora on the Landscape Chapter, sought to ensure that an appropriate balance was achieved between protection of landscape values and the technical and operational constraints of infrastructure providers. I note that the majority of the relief sought by Aurora on these matters has been rejected by the Section 42A Report Officer. There is no justification provided as to why the relief sought has been rejected. Those submission parts that have been accepted in part have resulted in recommended changes which, under the current definition of regionally significant infrastructure would not apply to Aurora.

3.16 The Section 42A Report Author has agreed that additional provisions are appropriate given the particular locational constraints of infrastructure, such that the following policy should be incorporated into the Landscape Chapter:

*Regional Significant Infrastructure shall be located to avoid degradation of the landscape, while acknowledging location constraints.*

3.17 In my view, the recommended policy wording does not go far enough in terms of recognising the technical and operational constraints which I consider are important if a balanced consent regime is to be provided for infrastructure within areas of landscape value. In my view the policy should provide the ability for infrastructure providers such as Aurora to not only avoid, but also to remedy or mitigate significant adverse effects. In the event that "*electricity distribution*" is not accepted as regionally significant infrastructure, then I consider the policy should be amended as follows:

*Regional Significant Infrastructure and electricity distribution networks shall be located to avoid, remedy or mitigate significant adverse effects on degradation of the landscape within Outstanding Natural Landscapes or Outstanding Natural Features, while acknowledging locational, technical and operational constraints.*

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

- 4.1 Aurora welcome the opportunity to be involved in the development of the Proposed Plan. Through this process Aurora seeks to ensure that its distribution assets are appropriately recognised as regionally significant and protected from the potential adverse effects of other activities, and that provision is made for operation, repair, upgrading and maintenance activities while appropriately managing potential adverse effects. In my view the amendments sought by Aurora on provisions contained in the Proposed Plan will promote the sustainable management of natural and physical resources and will assist Aurora in delivering a robust and reliable power distribution network within the District.

**J Dowd**

**17 March 2016**



# APPENDIX A

## Summary of Recent Project Experience

### Summary of Recent Project Experience

- Preparation of submissions on behalf of Aurora Energy Limited, on the Second Generation Dunedin City Plan.
- Preparation of submissions on behalf of Aurora Energy Limited, on the Queenstown Lakes District Plan.
- Resource consent for utility structures in Townscape Protection areas – Dunedin.
- Resource consent for an Electric Vehicle Charging Station – Dunedin.
- Preparation of Notice of Requirements for new electricity zone substations throughout Southland and Invercargill on behalf of The Power Company Limited.
- Preparation of outline plans for development of the Kennington Sub Station, Invercargill, on behalf of The Power Company Limited
- Infinity Investment Group – Riverside Stage 6 Variation to the Queenstown Lakes District Plan
- Infinity Investment Group – Peninsula Bay Plan Change, Wanaka
- Infinity Investment Group – Hillend Station, Wanaka
- Gibbston Valley Station – Obtaining resource consent for a luxury golf and viticultural resort within the Gibbston Valley including visitor accommodation, commercial activities, residential use and community facilities.
- Anthem Ventures Ltd – Resource Consent for Winery complex and associated development within the Gibbston Valley.
- University of Otago – Resource Consent Application to utilise research vessels in the inland waters of Fiordland.
- RPR Properties – Proposed Private Plan Change at Westacott Park, Dunedin.
- RJH Enterprises Ltd – Resource Consent for a Good Food Market and Rural Selling Place, Invercargill.