

IN THE MATTER OF

The Resource Management Act 1991

AND

IN THE MATTER OF

The Rezoning Hearing Stream 11 (Ski Area Sub Zones)

EVIDENCE OF

Stephen Skelton
Landscape Architect
BCom, MLA (Hons), NZILA (Registered)

ON BEHALF OF

572 - NZSki Limited

DATE

9 May 2017

1. My name is Stephen Russell Skelton. I am a registered landscape architect with a Bachelor of Arts in Communication and a Masters of Landscape Architecture from Lincoln University. I am the Director of Patch Limited, am contracted to Baxter Design and have been the project landscape architect working on this proposal since May 2016. I have been involved in landscape consultancy work in the Queenstown Lakes District area for approximately 4 years and am professionally familiar with the landscape values of the Queenstown Lakes District. I have a specialist understanding of the Remarkables alpine environment and its values rooted in my extensive experience climbing, skiing and hiking the Remarkables in all seasons.

Area 1 (A): Remarkable Ski Area Extension.

2. Dr Read expressed in her rebuttal evidence that the higher level of protections afforded by the extension of the Ski Area Sub-Zone (SASZ) into the Lake Alta cirque is negated as the activities this extension would provide for are permitted activities under an amended rule 21.4.19. In preparing my primary evidence I was not aware of this proposed amendment to this rule. I do however disagree with Dr Read that the higher level of protection which this extension to the SASZ would provide to the Lake Alta would create an anomaly. I consider the restrictions on earthworks and buildings in the Lake Alta cirque *and* the East Wye saddle would appropriately protect these highly natural areas from future earthworks and structures and set a precedent for a higher level of protection in the valued natural areas of the Lake Alta cirque and the Wye Creek catchment.
3. I agree with Dr Read that the Rastus Burn basin is totally dominated by the natural landforms and that the awareness of ski area infrastructure is 'inescapable'. I consider that the modifications of landform within the SASZ is significantly more prevalent in the summer months when the land is not covered in a blanket of snow, giving the landscape a consistent colour and texture. This is the case with all ski areas I have visited. I believe there is scope for additional earthworks and/or structures to be appropriately located within the proposed Area 1 (A) SASZ extension which would not increase the prevalence of the ski area infrastructure or lead to more than minor adverse cumulative effects on the landscape.

Area 2 (B): Proposed 'Ski Area Sub Zone B'

4. Dr Read stated that I failed to address the visibility of development from the Remarkable Road itself as a public place. I have driven the Remarkable Road more than 100 times and consider that the subject area where the proposed SASZ would be located holds relatively limited visual amenity as it zig-zags across the low, westerly foot of the mountain. This part of the road is the first or last experience of the road visitors encounter, offering relatively low experiential qualities as it is either proceeded or preceded by highly memorable and dramatic views of the Wakatipu Basin. The subject area is clad in exotic woody weeds which generally screens views of the wider landscape. I consider that the proposed SASZ Area 2 (B) would result in very low adverse effect on the visual amenity of the Remarkables Road.

5. With regards to the location of the ONL boundary, while no submissions have been made with respect to its location, I do not consider that the PDP location of this boundary has been thoroughly considered, especially as it crosses the subject site. The PDP location of the ONL line proposes an arbitrary right angle bend near the site's southwestern boundary, then follows the northern outline of the road before connecting with a topographic transition point between the mountain and tablelands. As I stated in my primary evidence, I consider that the lower portion of the site is linked to the more modified RLC/VAL landscape by land cover and land use patterning. The more cultivated vegetation cover of the surrounding land uses, including patches of mature conifers 'bookend' the site and I have demonstrated this visual link in photographs and plans attached to my primary evidence. Upon making this determination of the landscape category boundary I recommended to NZSki that the proposed SASZ Area 2 (B) not extend into the upper portions of the site. I note in her evidence Dr Read does not offer her opinion of this category boundary and that there have been no submissions for it to be altered.
6. Dr Read considers that should the SASZ Area 2 (B) be approved, earthworks would not require mitigation. This is incorrect as the provisions recommended by Mr Dent require that earthworks in the SASZ B be subject to a Restricted Discretionary activity status with discretion held over scale, location, visual quality and natural landform, visibility from the State Highway and landscape planting and rehabilitation. Regardless, it is important to note that the lower portions of the site where the SASZ Area B will be located are not highly visible from the wider landscape. This part of the western slopes of the Remarkables is insignificant in scale when compared to the much more dominant whole of Remarkables range.
7. Contrary to Dr Read's opinion, I have considered the effects of buildings and ancillary retail activities as part of my primary evidence. I understand that if the SASZ Area 2 (B) is approved the construction of buildings would be a Restricted Discretionary activity. Dr Read assesses that the SASZ Area 2 (B) would create a node of ski related activities. I consider that this part of the RLC has a visual association with the large scale commercial activities within Remarkables Park as well as the recent developments which will occur in the Hanley Downs area. It is my assessment that appropriately controlled buildings and retail activities could occur within the proposed SASZ Area 2 (B) without having adverse visual effects on the wider landscape. When experienced from the more immediate landscape, the SASZ Area 2 (B) would be held within the context of existing and residual developments which have led to a more modified character of the landscape. I consider that a 'node' of ski area infrastructure which may be enabled by this SASZ Area 2 (B) would continue the more modified character of the surrounding landscape and would, if appropriately controlled retain the existing visual amenity and landscape character.
8. Overall I consider that the SASZ Area 1 (A) would appropriately protect the more sensitive Lake Alta cirque, Wye Dome and East Wye Saddle while enabling appropriate ski area activities in areas of the landscape which can absorb development without reducing the amenity or character of the landscape. I also consider that the SASZ Area 2 (B) is in a low, RLC portion of the landscape where appropriately

controlled activities would not adversely affect the visual amenity or character of the foot of the Remarkables. This SASZ Area 2 (B) would be experienced within the context of existing and residual development and would not exacerbate the existing more modified character of the Coneburn Valley.

Steve Skelton

Registered Landscape Architect

9 May 2017