

Before the Hearing Panel

Under the Resource Management Act 1991

In the matter of submissions on variation to introduce landscape schedules 21.22 and 21.23 into Chapter 21 Rural Zone of the Proposed District Plan.

Statement of Evidence of Timothy George Barke and Victoria Maree Barke

31st August 2026

Submitter's solicitors:

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May it please the Panel

- 1 Our full names are Timothy George Barke and Victoria Maree Barke (nee Moss).
- 2 We own and reside at 217 Stevenson Road, Luggate, Wānaka, legally described as Lot 2, Deposited Plan 325795, and contained in Record of Title 104099 as identified in Appendix 1. Our land comprises approximately 20.149 hectares on Stevenson Road and is part of the Poplar Beach rural subdivision.
- 3 While we did not lodge a submission on the Upper Clutha Landscape Schedules Variation, we provide this evidence as neighbours of Dirk and Becky Venter,¹ and Mr Vaughn Howard Woodfield & Mrs Kathryn Maree Woodfield.² We support the concerns raised by Dirk and Becky and Vaughn and Kathryn, and the outcomes they seek through their submission. Our evidence is intended to assist the Panel by explaining our experience as neighbouring rural landowners on the Poplar Beach / Stevenson Road terrace, including the productive rural use, land stewardship, pest management and future land use flexibility that we consider should be recognised in this landscape context.
- 4 We provide this evidence based on our extensive knowledge of our property and our farming and improvement activities undertaken over the last 7 years since we purchased the property.
- 5 Our evidence is confined to matters within our personal knowledge, including the condition and use of our property, the work we have undertaken, our experience of the Poplar Beach / Stevenson Road terrace, and our intentions for the future management of the land. We provide factual evidence about the terrace and the practical realities of managing land within it.
- 6 Although we did not lodge our own submission on the Variation, we understand that our evidence is relevant to the relief sought by the Venters and Woodfield's. Our property forms part of the same lower terrace, and our experience provides further context about the productive rural use, existing modification, pest management and evolving character of this area.

¹ Who own the nearby property at 213 Stevenson Road and have lodged a submission (#47) on the variation.

² Who own the nearby property at 216 Stevenson Road and have lodged a submission (#39) on the variation.

Current activities on the Site

- 7 We purchased this property immediately prior to the arrival of Covid 19 as a legacy for our family, in order to enjoy rural living, and to ensure ongoing self-sufficient, sustainable income and as we move towards our retirement.
- 8 When we purchased the property, it was a “bare block” (no buildings) zoned Rural General and planted in lucerne crop, had no eastern nor western boundary fences and the property was infested with rabbits.
- 9 We have previously cropped lucerne but are currently “resting” the land in order to rebuild the soil profile and health.
- 10 In the future we intend to either crop or graze the flat land and/or potential plant and operate a vineyard. We would like to gradually replant the hillside in natives, over time (working with neighbours) helping create a natural corridor to potentially connect Luggate with Albert Town.
- 11 As described below, we have worked closely with our neighbours investing heavily to control rabbit populations which were at plague levels. This work is ongoing.
- 12 This work has been important both for productive use and for environmental recovery. High rabbit numbers affected the ability to establish crops and vegetation and contributed to poor soil and vegetation outcomes. Reducing those numbers has supported the recovery work described in this evidence and will be necessary for any future productive or native planting on the property.

Personal Background

- 13 I have 33 years' experience managing tourism businesses and experiential activities within New Zealand and internationally, with 20 years living and operating businesses in Queenstown and Wānaka.
- 14 I have a Bachelor's Degree in Parks, Recreation Managing Majoring in Tourism. I chose this Degree as I am passionate about working with our natural resources and contributing to the enhancement of them while utilising them sustainably and adding value to them for future generations. My son and his fiancé currently live on the property, looking after it while Vicky and I are in Taupō for another role.
- 15 At the time when we bought the property, I was General Manager of Totally Tourism a well-known and reputable company with a long history in the area, operating a number of tourism businesses located throughout the West Coast, MacKenzie Country, Queenstown, Wānaka and Milford

Sound. My wife Victoria worked as a Commercial Property Manager based in Queenstown and now works for Quantum Property Management.

- 16 During Covid 19 I took on the role as General Manager (then CEO) of Lake Wānaka Tourism for the subsequent 4.5 years. During this time I worked closely with the Wānaka and Queenstown Lakes communities, mana whenua, QLDC, Destination Queenstown and local voluntary organisations including Wai Wānaka, Southern Lakes Sanctuary, Te Kākano, WAO, Regenerative Wānaka and others, to redesign the role of tourism (and other industries) creating the Destination Management Plan “Travel to a Thriving Future” so as better reflect the taonga (things most treasured), wishes and sustainable future that our communities told us they wanted for future generations.
- 17 I also Chaired the Otago Conservation Board for 2 years.
- 18 Victoria and I are passionate about our property and its place now and in the future of Wānaka and the Queenstown Lakes District. We want to protect, celebrate and enhance the wairua and mauri of the place for our future generations. We want our children and their children to be able to enjoy and contribute to the enhancement of it.
- 19 The property is named Whakaoraora “the process of healing and wellbeing” to reflect the wairua you feel, and is often described, when you approach the lower terrace with our property and those of our neighbours.

Property Background

- 20 The wairua can be described as an energy (spirit) or feeling of wellbeing (or weight lifting off) you get from this whenua.
- 21 The mauri can be described as the “life force” of the place. This has been eroded over decades from when it was originally lushly forested then used as gardens producing sustenance for pre-European Māori communities, then farmed for many generations, to when we bought it as a dry, arid landscape that was infested with rabbits and was difficult to grow productive crop.
- 22 The lower terrace was subdivided into rural lifestyle blocks (referred to as Popular Beach subdivision) with the intention that they could be developed into productive small blocks and vineyards.
- 23 We have worked alongside our neighbours since then to progressively rabbit-fence the property and systematically reduce rabbit populations to what are now at a more manageable level.

- 24 Over several years we have worked with Wai Wānaka doing visual soil tests. Initially, from every 20 holes dug we would find maybe 1 or two worms. After cropping lucerne for two years we decided to deliberately rest the land for the last 5 years (no cropping or grazing) and are now starting to see worm populations and soil health return.
- 25 Also working with Wai Wānaka, we did a study of what sustainable activities the land would be most suited to in order to generate income while protecting and enhancing the land and soil health over time. There is a significant list of possible agricultural activities that could be undertaken to achieve viable revenue while gradually enhancing the soil health.
- 26 There is a lot more we can and want to do to progressively enhance the ecosystems (including soil) on the property, while developing a sustainable revenue stream enabling us to do this work and create a self-sufficient property for the long term.
- 27 We do not see productive use and environmental enhancement as competing objectives. The income generated from cropping, grazing, viticulture or another appropriate rural activity would assist us to fund ongoing rabbit control, fencing, soil improvement, native planting and other work required to maintain and enhance the property.
- 28 Likewise, improving soil condition, controlling pests and establishing appropriate vegetation will support the long-term productive use of the land. Our intention is to develop a rural system in which productive activity provides the means to continue caring for the property, rather than relying on the land remaining unchanged.
- 29 To achieve this, we need to retain the rights to be able to do the things essential to sustainably develop the property to its full potential without spending copious quantities of money and wasting our and Council's valuable time and public resources by wading through red tape and obstacles that are neither helpful nor productive for anyone other than legal experts.
- 30 The lower terrace does not consist of untouched or uniformly undeveloped land. From our experience, it contains a range of rural activities and developments. Those features vary between properties but collectively form the present character of the Poplar Beach rural subdivision. Our property and the neighbouring properties are also physically distinct from the river corridor in their day-to-day use, with the terrace being experienced as a lived-in and actively managed rural area.

Concerns with the Proposed Variation

- 31 Our concerns with the proposed changes to the District Plan are that they will make it next to impossible, or at least extremely and unnecessarily expensive, time consuming (for us and Council) and not cost effective to continue to develop and care for our properties.
- 32 We understand Council's position is that the Schedule will provide high-level guidance only and that a future site-specific assessment may identify different values or capacity. Our concern is that if the Schedule does not accurately recognise the existing productive character, rural use and modification of the lower terrace, landowners may need to engage planners, landscape architects and legal advisers to explain why broad descriptions should not be applied literally to their properties. For owners seeking to establish modest productive activities, the cost of that process may be disproportionate to the value or scale of the activity proposed.
- 33 These properties were subdivided as rural land parcels with the intention that they be productive and provide viable income and lifestyle for the owners while being in keeping with the surrounding rural properties and landscapes.
- 34 In order to achieve what was intended, we need to be able to retain the rights to operate and improve our properties as the rural land it is, including normal infrastructure required for any other rural property.
- 35 We are all passionate about our properties and it is not in any of our interests to degrade them, we just need our rights protected to be able to enhance and care for them.

Reasons we support the Venters' position

- 36 We support Dirk and Becky Venter's position because our experience of the Poplar Beach / Stevenson Road terrace is that it is an evolving rural production landscape. It has been used for productive rural purposes, including cropping and grazing, and it continues to require active management by landowners.
- 37 In our view, the landscape schedule should recognise that ordinary productive rural activities, pest management, fencing, soil improvement, productive planting, native planting, irrigation and practical rural infrastructure are all part of responsible rural land management. These activities should not be treated as inappropriate simply because they may change the appearance of the land over time.

- 38 We are particularly concerned that overly restrictive or uncertain wording in the proposed schedule could make routine rural management more complex, expensive and uncertain. That would not assist landowners who are trying to improve soil health, manage rabbits and weeds, maintain productive use, and enhance the long-term condition of their properties.
- 39 For those reasons, we support the relief sought by Dirk and Becky Venter to ensure the schedule appropriately recognises productive rural use, rural infrastructure, land stewardship and the need for flexibility for rural landowners on the Poplar Beach / Stevenson Road terrace.

31st August 2026

Tim and Vicky Barke

Appendix 1 – Map of Tim and Vicky Barke's land in the context of the Upper Clutha Rural Character Landscape Schedules overlay

