

**BEFORE THE HEARINGS COMMISSIONERS FOR THE WAIKATO DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**UNDER** the Resource Management Act 1991

**AND**

**IN THE MATTER** of hearing submissions and further submissions on the Proposed Waikato District Plan

**PARTIES REPRESENTED** **MIDDLEMISS FARM HOLDINGS LTD**

**BUCKLAND LANDOWNERS GROUP**

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**RURAL TOPIC – HEARING 18**

**SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE FROM DR VAUGHAN KEESING FOR MIDDLEMISS FARM HOLDINGS LIMITED AND THE BUCKLAND LANDOWNERS GROUP**

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 My name is Vaughan Francis Keesing. I am a practicing ecologist of 25 years and have the qualifications and experience as out lined in my evidence in chief.
- 1.2 Middlemiss' submission seeks deletions, amendments, and additions to several sections of the PWDP, including Chapter 5 and Chapter 22, primarily to introduce incentivised subdivision to achieve environmental and ecological enhancement for biodiversity, water quality and elite soils protection.

### Summary Statement of Evidence.

- 1.3 My evidence in chief relates the loss and remains of indigenous biodiversity (IB) in the Region. IB is very under-represented in the ecological districts of the Region (~ 11%). There is not much left, and what is left tends to be either relatively stable large tracks in reserves and DoC lands, or small vulnerable fragments throughout private land.
- 1.4 Small sites and those not quite good enough to be SNA are valuable (often with threatened species) and make up a large component of the remnant IB (1599 sites as compared to 689 SNA) which are critical over a wide landscape to sustain indigenous species.
- 1.5 IB restoration has value and is successful but such actions are expensive and ongoing.
- 1.6 The essence of my evidence is that the Proposed Plan is old in its approach to IB and fails to enable sufficiently incentivisation of conservation and restoration. The planner in the section 42a references a conservation lot as a method to attain development and that development appears the focus of the processes. Whereas I see todays' populace as needing a financial way of attaining a biodiversity gain through restoration etc, and they require the funds through small scale development, a subtle but very important difference in the focus. Given the depauperate IB of the region it would seem to me that the "balance" between small scale subdivision and biodiversity gains requires retuning in favour of IB.
- 1.7 It is not enough to do only protect the accepted SNAs to maintain the current level of IB. There are numerous not quite SNAs and too small SNAs which, if lost, would dramatical lessen the landscapes IB. There are almost no good incentives to save these many features and it is necessary to do so. The cost of restoration and ongoing management is, however, considerable and most landowners need substantive incentives and monetary support to successfully maintain IB on private land in perpetuity.
- 1.8 The plan as drafted does not provide these incentives, it seems more occupied in limiting small scale subdivision rather than incentivizing ecological protection, management and restoration.