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SUBMISSION ON PROPOSED PLAN CHANGE 7 TO REGIONAL PLAN: WATER FOR OTAGO

May 1, 2020

Otago Regional Council
70 Stafford Street,
Private Bag 1954,
Dunedin 9054

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Phil Alison, I am writing on behalf of Cherri Global Limited (CGL), 8 Tamblyn Road, Roxburgh to object to the whole of Plan Change 7: 'Water for Otago'.

The proposed changes have significant negative effects on our orchard operations. We require the use of water for irrigation to keep our trees alive, and without enough water, then we would have little or no crop and the trees would eventually die. The plan changes cause significant unease about future water allocation and consent conditions, while also increasing the cost per year. We already face a lot of uncertainty having to manage the Covid19 implications (uncertainty over future incomes, jobs, salaries, picking staff etc).

We took over our Central Otago orchards and the respective consents in 2017, therefore using the water take information for years 2017 and prior as the base figure for allocation doesn't accurately reflect our use over time and will disadvantage us. Consideration should also be given to the fact that with climate change, growing conditions are likely to get more difficult (rather than easier) therefore water is more important to us than ever. In order to maximise the water allocation we do get, we have implemented efficient irrigation methods on orchards since 2017.

It should also be taken into consideration that as we are a horticultural business we will only irrigate seasonally – we will not be a 12 month user.

The Plan Change 7 is counter-productive to intensive cropping and will halt our growth plans, not to mention creating hurdles for us every couple of years, banks may pull their support and investors may walk away. It does not create a sustainable pathway forward and is contradictory to the government's objective to grow horticultural exports. Central Otago is famous around the world for growing premium quality, export cherries, but inadequate water supply would potentially ruin that reputation by reducing the quality, and therefore diminishing the export returns.

The proposed Plan Changes will also not support permanent horticulture as this kind of horticulture requires a longer term horizon than 6 years whereby you could have the chance of having a water permit renewal application declined and therefore the operator may lose their investment. This level of uncertainty would be disastrous for the operator, staff and the wider community. It lacks economic reality.

The proposed plan change is unnecessary because the current process works. The whole change process has been unprofessional with no consistency of staff, lack of notice, bad timing and poor communication and consultation.

In summary, the Plan Change 7 is a massive threat to our business, without adequate water / irrigation, if the trees die and the company folds, that is a loss of jobs for around 60 FTE staff. We propose that the Otago Regional Council abandons Plan Change 7, and amends the RMA to extend the October 2021 deadline to October 2025 to align with the new NPS based water plan.

I wish to be able to speak to my submission at the Environment Court hearing.

Lastly, I also wish to endorse the submissions by the Coal Creek Group plus the submission from the umbrella group "OtagoWater resource Users Group" (OWRUG).

Please confirm receipt of this submission by return of email.

Kind regards,

Phil Alison

Phil Alison

CEO CHERRI Group of Companies

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