

F4PC Hearing Block One Introduction and Summary – James Bailey

Today I am here to speak on behalf of Farmers for Positive Change (F4PC) and I have been asked to speak on the Collaborative Stakeholder Group (CSG) process. I propose that I give you this short introduction and then I will highlight some key paragraphs of my evidence.

As our name implies, our group is made up of forward thinking farmers and professionals who thrive on innovation and sustainable progress. In my evidence for F4PC I have the job of looking back at how Plan Change One (PC1) was developed. This is not an exercise in trying to apportion blame. We simply believe that it would be helpful to you as commissioners to understand our perspective of the development of the PC1 that is in front of you today, to inform your deliberations and recommendations for a more effective policy package.

The Sheep and Beef sector and the CSG

From the beginning of the CSG process it was apparent that there was an expectation amongst some CSG members that the Sheep and Beef sector needed to take a disproportionate amount of responsibility in the reduction of contaminants entering the Waikato and Waipa rivers. This was largely due to a misinformed, and misunderstood, perceived lack of action from sheep and beef farmers around riparian fencing.

Despite this I put my faith in the CSG process and the CSG members and worked to communicate the work that is being done on farm and explain the tools that can help all farmers get on the trajectory to achieve the Vision and Strategy. The primary tool being meaningful farm environment planning.

The Development of Words

I put faith in the process by working, for what was a large portion of our CSG timeframe, on the development of words for things like the *'Focus Statement'*, *'Policy Selection Criteria'*, and *'Allocation Principles'*. Through extensive consultation with our sectors we, as a group, developed words and phrases like:

- *"Practical options for managing contaminants" – CSG Focus Statement*
- *"Like Land is treated the same" – Allocation Principles*

- *"Allows For Flexibility and Intergenerational Land Use" – Policy Selection Criteria*
- *"Provide confidence and clarity for current and future investment" – Policy Selection Criteria*

Unfortunately, Little to no consideration was given to these checks and balances in the rushed final few months of the CSG. And these words certainly do not align with the PC1 that was notified.

Intensive final Period of the CSG

As we approached the two-year mark of the CSG process my sector was reasonably happy with where things were headed. Then, over an intensive few months, the whole nature of the policy package changed with the inclusion of things like the Nitrogen Reference Point, and wording in the Plan that was not consistent with the discussions we had and the checks and balances we had worked to develop. Finally, after exhausting all avenues for collaboration, I had no choice but to formally object to Plan Change One and what it had become. This was not a decision I took lightly and was a disappointing end to a process that we had all worked so hard at. More importantly, it is our firm belief that PC1 does not put us on the trajectory to achieve The Vision and Strategy, in fact it hinders us from doing so.