

Tēna koutou commissioners.

Kō Pam Guest toku ingoa.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today about the amendments requested by Greater Wellington to embed nature-based solutions into Plan Change 56 to better provide for climate change mitigation and adaptation. In particular, I would like to highlight the critical role that we, as planning professionals, have to support our communities to respond to the climate emergency and to look for every available opportunity to ensure that climate response is front and central to decision making under the RMA.

As we are all, only too acutely, aware, climate change is impacting our communities now, these impacts will increase, and the rate of increase is happening faster than anticipated. Every week seems to bring another significant event – tornadoes, floods, slips, and marine heat waves have all caused significant damage to our communities and the natural environment in the past few months.

Several weeks ago the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released the final part of its mammoth sixth assessment report, running to thousands of pages of scientific review of human knowledge on climate change. It boiled down to one “final warning” ... “act now or it will be too late”.

The UN secretary general said: “This report is a clarion call to massively fast-track climate efforts by every country and every sector and on every timeframe. Our world needs climate action on all fronts: everything, everywhere, all at once.”

This morning a review for a book titled “Not Too Late. Changing the climate story from despair to possibility” dropped into my newsfeed. A core message was that it will be a series of small and imperfect changes that will edge us closer to building the critical mass that will eventually shift the status quo and, if we all act now, a climate-resilient future is still possible.

Plan Change 56 presents one such small opportunity to help change the status quo.

Greater Wellington is strongly supportive of the housing intensification enabled by Plan Change 56 but seeks amendments to ensure that this new development represents density “done well”. Plan Change 56 presents a critical opportunity to ensure that the new generation of housing that it will enable is “fit for purpose”, ensuring that further housing is not enabled in areas that will expose communities to undue hazard risk (as described by Dr Dawe) and embedding design features into new development to both reduce greenhouse gas emissions and strengthen climate-resilience (as

described by Mr Farrant). Housing is long-term infrastructure. Not to take this opportunity will lock in sub-optimal outcomes for future generations.

The amendments suggested in my evidence seek to ensure that nature-based solutions are an integral part of new development. This aligns with the strong national direction to prioritise nature-based solutions in our planning and regulatory systems to address the climate and biodiversity crises together.

Nature-based solutions are actions that protect, enhance, or restore natural ecosystems, and/or that incorporate natural elements into built environments, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and/or strengthen the resilience of humans to the effects of climate change, while having co-benefits for indigenous biodiversity and the natural environment. Examples particularly relevant to the development provided for by Plan Change 56 include the use of rain gardens, porous surfaces, green roofs and rainwater reuse tanks to support stormwater and flood management, and the planting and retaining of canopy trees to help to reduce heat in urban areas.

The evidence of Mr Farrant discusses the risks of continuing with a “business as usual” approach to development planning and design, especially when combined with the increase in density and development enabled by Plan Change 56. Mr Farrant describes, and provides examples of, good practice climate-resilient design which integrates nature-based solutions into development at a range of scales. I note that much of this good practice is not particularly new or novel; water sensitive urban design for example has been standard practice in many countries for several decades.

Greater Wellington has identified a number of provisions across Proposed Plan Change 56 where amendments to better provide for climate change adaptation and mitigation, with preference for nature-based solutions, would contribute to the relief being sought. Suggested amendments are set out in Appendix 3 to assist the Panel.

Amendments sought include adding new and amending proposed objectives, policies and rules to the Urban Environment, Medium and High-Density Residential Activity Area chapters to give better effect to Policy 1 clauses (e) and (f), to support reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and provide resilience to the likely current and future effects of climate change. I also note that some of the proposed amendments will give teeth to the policy framework proposed by Mr Shield to give effect to Te Mana o te Wai.

I note that amendments sought by Greater Wellington to the following provisions may be precluded by clause 6 of Schedule 3A of the RMA:

## Speaking Notes of Pam Guest GWRC for HCC Plan Change 56 hearing - 12 April 2023

- 1.10.1A Urban Environment New objective
- Objective 4F 2.1AA
- New Policy 4
- Objective 4G 2.1

In this case, in my opinion the relief sought could be addressed by the inclusion of new provisions or amendments to existing provisions as already requested. I also consider that it would be helpful to include the NPS-UD definition for a **well-functioning urban environment** in Plan Change 56, providing clarity for plan users as to the climate response components integral to this term.