

BEFORE THE INDEPENDENT COMMISSIONERS

IN THE MATTER

of the Resource Management Act 1991
("RMA")

AND

IN THE MATTER

of a submission by KiwiRail Holdings
Limited ("**KiwiRail**") on Hearing Stream
7 (Light, Noise, and Temporary
Activities) of the Proposed Lower Hutt
District Plan ("**Proposed Plan**")

**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF MICHELLE GRINLINTON-HANCOCK
ON BEHALF OF KIWIRAIL HOLDINGS LIMITED**

CORPORATE

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 My name is Michelle Grinlinton-Hancock and I am the Manager of the RMA Team for KiwiRail. I refer to my evidence prepared for Hearing Stream 6: Infrastructure which sets out my qualifications and work experience.¹ I also refer to section 3 of that evidence which sets out the context of KiwiRail's operations in the Lower Hutt District.
- 1.2 I am authorised to give this evidence on behalf of KiwiRail in relation to its submission points allocated to Hearing Stream 7 (which relates to noise).
- 1.3 The extent of KiwiRail's rail network in the Lower Hutt District is significant. The lines are busy with passenger and freight trains running frequently during the day and into the night.
- 1.4 Although KiwiRail recognises the need for urban development in and around transport nodes, urban development has the potential to result in effects on both the operation of the rail corridor and those who live and work near it. There is a need to manage the interface between development and the rail

¹ Dated 7 September 2026 at section 1.

corridor by including provisions for managing noise and vibration effects from rail operations in the Proposed Plan. KiwiRail's submission sought to refine and strengthen these provisions.

- 1.5 I support the strengthening of these provisions and consider they are necessary and appropriate to manage noise and vibration effects from the operation of the rail corridor. I support the provisions set out in **Attachment A** to Ms Heppelthwaite's evidence.

2. NOISE AND VIBRATION EFFECTS FROM RAIL OPERATIONS

- 2.1 Trains are large and travel at speed. As set out in my evidence for Hearing Stream 6, the Lower Hutt rail network carries a mix of commuter services and diesel-hauled freight and passenger trains. The Wairarapa Line has scheduled freight movements, including at night, in addition to frequent daytime passenger services. These operations generate noise and vibration.
- 2.2 KiwiRail is a responsible infrastructure operator and has an ongoing programme of upgrade and maintenance work to improve track conditions over time, which helps to minimise potential rail noise and vibration. However, as outlined in Dr Chiles' evidence, residual noise and vibration effects cannot be entirely internalised within the rail corridor and have the potential to cause ongoing disturbance and adverse health effects to communities surrounding the rail corridor.²
- 2.3 KiwiRail is very supportive of urban development around the rail corridor. However, it is critical that the Proposed Plan appropriately addresses these effects through appropriate planning provisions so that health and wellbeing impacts on neighbouring communities are minimised, and the ongoing operation and efficiency of the rail network is provided for now and in the future.
- 2.4 As well as ensuring the health and wellbeing of communities, infrastructure, and infrastructure operators, KiwiRail is also concerned about the potential for reverse sensitivity effects to arise from new or intensified sensitive activities (eg dwellings) developing near the rail corridor. Reverse sensitivity, a well-recognised resource management concept, refers to the impact that locating new, sensitive activities adjacent to existing lawfully established effects-generating activities has on the ongoing operation of those existing activities.

² Statement of Evidence of Dr Chiles dated 29 September 2026 at sections 4 and 5.

- 2.5 New developments, or redevelopment and intensification of existing sensitive uses, can result in greater numbers of individuals being subject to adverse noise and vibration effects. This can result in increased complaints and potential operational constraints on the rail network (such as limitations on operating hours), which in turn constrains the ongoing operation and future development of the rail corridor.

3. KIWIRAIL'S PLANNING CONTROLS

- 3.1 To address these potential effects in a consistent way, KiwiRail seeks provisions in district plans around the country that appropriately manage the interface between the rail corridor and adjacent sensitive activities.
- 3.2 The notified version of the Proposed Plan included provisions addressing potential effects from the rail corridor, including through application of the "Highway and Railway Noise Overlay – High" and "Highway and Railway Noise Overlay – Moderate". These overlays apply at distances of 20m and 40m from the rail corridor respectively. New buildings for activities sensitive to noise within these areas are subject to acoustic insulation requirements. The Proposed Plan does not include any provisions relating to vibration effects from the rail corridor.
- 3.3 While KiwiRail supports the intent of these overlays and associated provisions, they do not go far enough, primarily in terms of their physical extent, to adequately address the effects from the rail corridor. KiwiRail therefore seeks through its submission:
- (a) that the "Highway and Railway Noise Overlay – High" and "Highway and Railway Noise Overlay – Moderate" be replaced with a single Highway and Railway Noise Overlay ("**Noise Overlay**"), based on a 100m setback from the rail corridor;
 - (b) that a Vibration Alert Area Overlay be included in the Proposed Plan ("**Vibration Overlay**"); and
 - (c) a new single noise provision, using an indoor noise limit approach for acoustic insulation, to replace provisions in the Proposed Plan that address potential rail noise effects.
- 3.4 These and other amendments sought by KiwiRail are further addressed in Ms Heppelthwaite's evidence. Ms Heppelthwaite's recommended amendments to the provisions are set out in **Attachment A** to her evidence.

- 3.5 The Section 42A Report Author (Mr Davis) recommends accepting a range of KiwiRail's submissions allocated to Hearing Stream 7 but has rejected the noise and vibration related relief summarised above. I address Mr Davis' recommendations on these matters below.

Rail Noise Control Overlay

- 3.6 Mr Davis recommends rejecting KiwiRail's request for a single Noise Overlay applying within 100m of the rail corridor designation boundary, preferring instead to retain the separate "High" and "Moderate" subareas as notified.³
- 3.7 KiwiRail continues to seek a single Noise Overlay for the reasons set out by Ms Heppelthwaite and Dr Chiles in their evidence. Regarding the extent of the overlay, applying controls over a distance of 100m is supported by Dr Chiles' evidence, which demonstrates that adverse noise effects are experienced 100m from the rail corridor.⁴ As Dr Chiles explains, the 100m distance reflects a reasonable compromise to capture the most affected sites without requiring assessment where building treatment is less likely to be required.⁵
- 3.8 Additionally, the rail network in the Lower Hutt District is expected to grow, including through increased freight and passenger services. Given the life of the Proposed Plan, it is prudent to plan for this growth, noting Mr Davis expressly acknowledges that the Wellington Strategic Rail Plan provides for future expansion of rail services.⁶ Given the predicted future growth of this line, it is appropriate and necessary to apply a Noise Overlay within 100 metres of the rail corridor to mitigate adverse effects on the most affected sites.

Vibration

- 3.9 KiwiRail's submission sought the inclusion of a Rail Vibration Alert Overlay ("**Vibration Overlay**") to apply within 100m of the rail corridor designation boundary. I confirm KiwiRail is only seeking the Vibration Overlay apply within 60m of the designation boundary. Mr Davis has recommended this submission point be rejected.
- 3.10 Dr Chiles' evidence demonstrates that rail vibration has a very real effect on neighbours (with the potential to result in reverse sensitivity effects on KiwiRail) that requires mitigation.⁷ The Vibration Overlay is a pragmatic approach to this

³ Section 42A Report at [69].

⁴ Statement of Evidence of Dr Chiles dated 29 September 2026 at sections 6 and 7.

⁵ Statement of Evidence of Dr Chiles dated 29 September 2026 at [7.7].

⁶ Section 42A Report at [289].

⁷ Statement of Evidence of Dr Chiles dated 29 September 2026 at sections 4 and 5.

issue. It would apply to all properties located within 60m of the rail corridor boundary but would be for information purposes only (ie there are no land use controls or district plan provisions applying within the area).

- 3.11 The Vibration Overlay simply signals to plan users and applicants that rail-related vibration may require consideration at the design and consenting stages. It would not amount to a blanket prohibition on development or establish that all land within an alert area is unsuitable for sensitive activities; rather, it would encourage site-specific assessment and appropriate mitigation. This approach protects the rail corridor and would reduce the risk of any future complaints and operational constraints.
- 3.12 Such alert layers are not novel. Similar vibration alert areas have been included in other recent district plans, including the Waikato District Plan, Whangārei District Plan, and the Auckland Unitary Plan (Drury precinct provisions).

Michelle Grinlinton-Hancock

29 September 2026