

**BEFORE THE INDEPENDENT HEARING PANEL ON PROPOSED PRIVATE PLAN  
CHANGE 13 TO THE OPERATIVE HAMILTON CITY DISTRICT PLAN**

**IN THE MATTER** of the Resource Management Act 1991 (the Act)

**AND**

**IN THE MATTER** of proposed Private Plan Change 13 to the Hamilton  
City District Plan

---

**Statement of Evidence of Andrew James Castles on behalf of the Waikato  
Racing Club Incorporated  
Dated: 26 July 2023**

---

## **MAY IT PLEASE THE INDEPENDENT HEARING PANEL**

### **INTRODUCTION**

1. My name is Andrew James Castles. I am the Chief Executive Officer of the Waikato Racing Club Incorporated (**WRCI**), which is the applicant for Plan Change 13 (**PC13**). I have held this position since March 2020.
2. My responsibilities include leadership and oversight of operations at the Te Rapa Racecourse, as well as oversight of WRCI's other commercial interests.
3. This corporate evidence is made on behalf of WRCI, and I am authorised to present this evidence.
4. For completeness, I note that from 1 August 2023 the Waikato Racing Club will merge with Cambridge Jockey Club and Waipa Racing Club. It will then be known as Waikato Thoroughbred Racing Club. The Waikato Racing Club is the "continuing club" in this merger but is undergoing a name change. As such, by the time the hearing of PC13 commences, I will be the CEO for Waikato Thoroughbred Racing.

### **INVOLVEMENT WITH PC13**

5. I have been directly involved with, and have stayed fully abreast of, the development of PC13. This has involved a range of workstreams, including engaging the team of experts who are working on the plan change, attending workshops and project meetings and discussions with some of our neighbours.

### **PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF EVIDENCE**

6. In my evidence, I:

- (a) Summarise, by way of background, the WRCI business context, including the Te Rapa Racecourse and WRCI's other commercial interests;
- (b) Outline the PC13 proposal, including the rationale for PC13 and the importance of establishing an attractive entrance to the Te Rapa Racecourse;
- (c) Briefly comment on submissions and the s42A Report; and
- (d) Set out some concluding comments.
- (e) In preparing my evidence I have reviewed the submissions and the s42A Report.

## **WRCI BUSINESS CONTEXT**

### **Te Rapa Racecourse**

- 7. WRCI is the owner and operator of the Te Rapa Racecourse, which is the only horse racing events venue in Hamilton. WRCI has been in existence since 1924 when the Hamilton horse racing operations relocated to the Te Rapa Racecourse from the previous location at Claudelands.
- 8. The Te Rapa Racecourse has been developed over time, with the addition of various amenities and facilities to cater for local racing operations and other events. The Racecourse is used for a range of activities, including various race day events, full time and casual training, and other functions including corporate events, party spaces and weddings.
- 9. We usually hold 18 race days per year, although in 2022/23 we held extra race days as Te Rapa is the venue for some Auckland Thoroughbred Racing meetings while the Ellerslie Racecourse is being significantly renovated and upgraded. Our racing calendar will return

to normal this season and is unlikely to change much in the foreseeable future.

10. Attendance at racing events is variable. Our biggest race days are typically the SkyCity Hamilton Waikato Cup and Christmas at the Races which occur on consecutive Saturdays in December and Legends Day which is held on a Saturday in February. These events can each attract up to 6,000 spectators. The maximum spectator attendance for the remaining events is typically about 2,000-2,500 people, although some events attract significantly fewer spectators, particularly outside of summer.

#### **Other Commercial Interests**

11. The financial performance of WRCl cannot be reliant on income from horse racing alone. A concerted effort has been made to diversify the WRCl's income streams through multi-functional use of the club's facilities (for other functions) and strategic use of underutilised, high value land that surrounds the racecourse.
12. Within the past 10-20 years, WRCl has sold surplus land where the Metlifecare Forest Lakes Retirement Village and Bupa Retirement Village are now located, as well as land near Sir Tristram Avenue to Fairview Motors.
13. In addition, WRCl (via its commercial entity Mainstreet Place Limited Partnership) has built commercial buildings on Sir Tristram Avenue and Mainstreet Place which are currently leased by Best Start Childcare and Aber Living. WRCl also substantially refitted a commercial building on Te Rapa Road which is leased by Signature Homes.

### **PC13 Proposal**

14. PC13 has been a long process for WRCI that started around 2017. Like most racing clubs in New Zealand (and Australia for that matter) WRCI continues to have surplus land for the needs of a modern-day racing club. WRCI's desire is to have a part of the Te Rapa Racecourse that is currently underutilised rezoned to allow WRCI to have options for future development.
15. The underutilised land which has been identified for rezoning consists of approximately 6.5 hectares. The part of the PC13 area which borders the Metlifecare Forest Lakes Retirement Village is only used once a year for car parking on Waikato Cup Day. The remainder of the PC13 area includes land which is used for horse float parking on race days as well as areas which are currently occupied by race day stabling blocks.
16. The stabling blocks are nearing the end of their useful life and will be demolished as part of the development of the PC13 site. Parking and race day stabling will be moved to another part of the racecourse precinct. Our intention is to provide a new, modern stable complex which is far more user friendly for people and horses.
17. One of the key outcomes that WRCI would like to see from the plan change is an attractive entranceway to the Te Rapa Racecourse from Ken Browne Drive and Sir Tristram Avenue. WRCI consider that the proposed mix of residential and open space activities will achieve this and complement the racecourse well.
18. The outlook from parts of the PC13 site over the racecourse is also an attractive proposition which we believe will be appealing for residents and lends itself well to medium density housing. Having a mix of residential dwellings spread across the development, potentially

including some buildings up to four storeys, will provide a modern, energised look for an area that currently looks tired.

### **Response to Submissions**

19. I have been regularly updated by the project team throughout my involvement in the project on feedback from consulted parties and on responses to issues raised in submissions. WRCI, along with the independent consultant team, have carefully reviewed all submissions on PC13 and have sought to respond to matters raised where practicable. This has resulted in several changes to PC13 which are supported by the applicant's team of expert advisors (including the post-notification changes outlined in Mr Olliver's evidence).
  
20. For example, a number of changes have been made to address concerns raised during consultation and in some submissions about the interface between activities on adjacent industrial sites and the proposed residential area. This included a major redesign of the development layout to include a 30m buffer within WRCI's site. While this will come at a considerable cost to WRCI given the amount of land involved, we have elected to pursue these changes to ensure that our proposed development can co-exist with industrial activities along Te Rapa Road and Ken Browne Drive. The various experts will address this and other aspects of submissions.

### **Response to s42A Report**

21. WRCI is pleased with the recommendation in the s42A Report. There are some minor matters of detail raised which the expert team for WRCI will address in their evidence.

## CONCLUSION

22. The proposed rezoning will enable good use to be made of land which is no longer required for racecourse related uses, and which has been underutilised for many years. WRCI is pleased that residential development that will be enabled by the rezoning will contribute to an attractive entrance for the Te Rapa Racecourse, as well as much needed housing supply for Hamilton City. The revenue earned from development of the site will help to support the local horse racing industry and future development of the Te Rapa Racecourse, which is an important regional community asset.
23. WRCI has carefully considered advice from our expert team and has responded in good faith to consultation feedback and submissions. While WRCI accepts that some neighbours and other parties seek further amendments or are opposed to PC13, WRCI is confident that PC13 will deliver a high-quality outcome that will be positive for Hamilton City and the region.



---

**Andrew Castles**  
**Dated: 26 July 2023**