

**BEFORE THE DECISION MAKERS
AT NEW PLYMOUTH**

IN THE MATTER of the Resource
Management Act 1991
("RMA")

AND

IN THE MATTER an application to renew
existing resource consents
associated with a
composting operation at
Uruti

BETWEEN **Remediation New Zealand
Limited**
Applicant

AND **Taranaki Regional Council**
Consent Authority

**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF
JOHN DANIEL OXENHAM
Dated: 22 MARCH 2021**

INTRODUCTION

1. I live at 1415 Mokau Road, RD 47, Urenui, 4379 and have lived here for 77 years.
2. I was born and breed here. I have a beef farm. I am the third generation on our farm. I brought up my family here and now live here on my own.
3. I am a member of the North Taranaki Awa Protection Society and provide this witness statement in support of Dawn and Glen Bendall and Jenny Baker. I attended the pre-hearing meeting on 31 August 2020 and was a submitter to the application for renewal in 2018.
4. I am a member and first responder for the Urenui Health Group with 30 years' experience and have attended to many respiratory and lung disease patients in my time. I am very concerned for the health and wellbeing of the residence of Uruti and wider community.
5. I have appeared at the hearing in April 2009 for the first renewal of the remediation consents to discharge to air and water. I submitted to those hearings because of the smelly odour most nights and mornings from the stinking composting operation.
6. Whatever the outcome, better monitoring from Taranaki Regional Council is **a must** to insure no illegal dumping takes place.

ODOUR EFFECTS

7. When RLTD first came to Uruti Valley they said they were going to be a composting operation. We had our concerns because we had heard reports from other locations about the odour issues this company had in other areas. We were assured by the company directors that there would be no problems as far as odour beyond the boundary as their consent states.

8. As time went by odour issues became unbearable. After months of exposure to extreme odour we were forced to make complaints to TRC and to the RLTD Directors.
9. Initially there was chicken DAF, chicken mortality and fish waste being processed on the site. This let off a putrid and unbearable odour. Following consistent and ongoing complaints in the early stages about the strong odour, the RLTD Directors came to the conclusion that chicken DAF was the main cause of the strong odours and ceased to take it.
10. Following this, the smell subsided slightly from the operation since the chicken DAF ceased and the nature of the odour changed however the odour did not disappear. It is not as bad as it used to be but the stench is still present, now it smells like sewage and is still offensive to smell.
11. I believe the continuing stench smell is coming from the settling ponds which I have commented on many times to RLTD and TRC. The smell continues to smell all over my farm as I am directly opposite RLTD. The odour has become worse and more consistent over the last five years.
12. We went for a site visit awhile back and when we were on site I could smell the ponds very strongly. The smell from the ponds is the same smell that I experience at my house, a sewage smell. That is why I believe the smell is coming from there. RLTD say when they go turn their compost over that's also when you can smell the waste.
13. On the farm you can move away from a smell like a dead animal for example but the worm farm smell when it's there, it's everywhere, so you cannot walk away from it. It's a different smell than anything I smell on the farm.
14. When I am on the road and a truck goes past me I can sometimes smell the trucks. Not all trucks stink, just certain material.

15. Due to the topography of the site, it's like a big tunnel, it depends on the atmosphere. If the atmospheric conditions are right and depending on what is being composted at the site at the time, the odours will flow down the valley and out onto the road and over to my house. When there is wind and sun it all disperses up in the atmosphere.
16. On average we probably go a week or two weeks without smelling and then you could smell it for 2-3 nights at dawn and dusk. That has been the pattern for the last five years or so. It's not every day and it's not all day.
17. I have smelt the odour all over my 164 hectare property. Smelt it 2kms each side of my road number 1415 Mokau Road.
18. Odour is more present from 8pm at night when the night cools and can stay in the valley all night through to 8am in the morning. Depending on weather conditions as to how bad the smell is. On foggy mornings it is at its worst and can present as a wall of stench.
19. To be honest I don't complain a lot because I find that it's a waste of a phone call. It is too frustrating and I feel like we are not being taken seriously. After we call, TRC comes out and says that it is not offensive or objectionable. This is very upsetting when you are living in it and exposed to it all the time.
20. I have never seen the TRC officer attend the site myself. This is because I am out on the farm working and away from the road front boundary. However, I have received texts and follow up calls the next day to confirm that an officer has been out. The issue is that the smell is consistently in the morning or evening and by the time the officer is present (because they are driving from Stratford) it may have dissipated if they come out in the morning. I am unaware if an officer has come out at night.

21. I have not kept an odour diary but conferred with Glen & Dawn Bendall when there is a strong stench.
22. Over the last 20 years, when my family visit they will often complain about the smell.
23. I have often gone to the neighbours for barbecues (at Dawn and Glens or Syd and Jenny place when they still lived there) for a few drinks but we would angrily end up inside closing the doors and windows and soon after I would go home. This had the effect of ruining our night and affecting our ability to enjoy our community.
24. Motorists who I knew (i.e locals and friends) used to phone me complaining about the smell as they drove to work. This hasn't happened in the last few years but used to happen more frequently. The reason they call me is because they don't know who else to call, there is no sign anywhere.
25. For a long time I have hoped that RLTD would sort out their smelly, stanching operation. However, that has not happened and my faith that odour issues can be addressed and/ or odour management can be applied so that odour is no longer an issue is very low.
26. Over the years being a first responder I have noticed my eyes are watery and itchy with an itchy face and upper respiratory tract with phlem in upper chest. I have noticed this over the last 5 years. Symptoms could have been going on for years prior but unaware of why it was happening. Since we have had access to more information about the chemicals going on site to RLTD, it has made us aware of the symptoms we are having.
27. Over the years the frustration, anxiety and depression caused by the RLTD has put pressure on my relationships and mental health.

MIMITANGIATUA RIVER

28. Over the years I have noticed frothy, soapy water in the Mimitangiatua River. This only occurred after the RLTD site was established and operating in the valley. I have noticed this occurring more frequently over the years.
29. I have noticed a strong discolouring of water coming down the Haehanga Stream into the Mimitangiatua River. The Mimi river was a natural colour at the time. There is a continuous dust problem at the RLTD entrance in the summer time. A truck load of drilling mud spilt onto Mokau Road at Gully Rock which had a very, toxic and chemical smell. The Urenui fire brigade was called to clean up the mess and had great difficulty hosing it off. There was a paunch spillage at the entrance of RLTD which stunk and left on the roadside to decompose.
30. I have noticed there are no adult whitebait or eel population has dwindled in the river since RLTD has been there. It has progressively got worse over the years. Prior to RLTD there was active fish life in the river. The native black freshwater mussels are dying as I see them on my river bank.
31. I have poor water quality which is undrinkable, gives you diarrheha when you drink from the tap and now buy my drinking water. This was not always the case it was clean, prestine, sparkling water before RLTD came.

JOHN DANIEL OXENHAM

Date 22TH MARCH 2021