

Before the Independent Hearing Commissioner
At Ashburton District Council

under: the Resource Management Act 1991

in the matter of: application LUC23/0109 to the Ashburton District Council relating to the proposed equestrian centre located on 279 Stranges Road, Ashburton

between: **Southern Parallel Equine Centre Limited**
Applicant

and: **Ashburton District Council**
Consent Authority

Statement of evidence of Kevin Hansen

Dated: 20 March 2024

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STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF KEVIN HANSEN

INTRODUCTION

- 1 My full name is Kevin Allen Hansen.
- 2 I have a lifetime of serious involvement in the equestrian world both from a competitive as well as an administrative viewpoint.
- 3 I represented New Zealand in show jumping in the 1970's and 80's, following which I became involved in the administrative side of the sport by qualifying as an international course designer; one of only five in New Zealand.
- 4 I have designed courses throughout the world, including the Sydney Olympic Games in 2000 and Athens in 2004.
- 5 I have been both President and Chair of Equestrian Sports New Zealand from 2001 – 2007.
- 6 I was part of a small group of equestrian enthusiasts who initiated the transfer of the Horse of the Year Show from Auckland to Hawke's Bay in 1998 and from there managed the event until 2015.
- 7 I have been engaged by Southern Parallel Equine Centre Limited (*SPEC*) to provide expert evidence on planning matters in relation to its application for a resource consent (*Application*) to establish an equine centre in Lake Hood (the *Proposed Equine Centre*).
- 8 The purpose of my evidence is to provide some context around the need and demand for the Proposed Equine Centre in New Zealand, and to provide examples of some comparative facilities in New Zealand and abroad.

CODE OF CONDUCT

- 9 Although this is not an Environment Court hearing, I note that in preparing my evidence I have reviewed the Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses contained in Part 9 of the Environment Court Practice Note 2023. I have complied with it in preparing my evidence. I confirm that the issues addressed in this statement of evidence are within my area of expertise, except where relying on the opinion or evidence of other witnesses. I have not omitted to consider material facts known to me that might alter or detract from the opinions expressed.

THE NEED AND DEMAND FOR THE PROPOSED EQUINE CENTRE

- 10 The Proposed Equine Centre has been designed to be one of its kind in the Southern Hemisphere. The sport horse industry is expanding

at a far greater rate than the racing industry. The demand for well-bred and trained young horses in the United States and Europe far outweigh the breeding establishments in the Northern Hemisphere. The centre needs to build it right first time to take advantage of this demand.

- 11 It will enable the world's top blood lines to be used in New Zealand. Through artificial insemination and the use of embryos, the best blood lines from the top sport horse stables in Europe and America can be brought into New Zealand. With facilities, such as those of the Proposed Equine Centre, these bloodlines can be used in conjunction with local horses to breed the best in the world.
- 12 The Proposed Equine Centre needs to plan and develop facilities which will cater to its planned growth, as once SPEC's high value breeding programme is underway, any further construction would not be recommended. Any additional construction work would place significant stress on the stud horses. If such an event was required, the stud stock would need to be removed from the site for the duration of construction which is not an option financially or for continuity in breeding.
- 13 The approximately 650 stables planned are required and necessary for a facility of this nature. The maths is fairly simple. Most of the horse sales in the sport horse industry happens between the ages of four and seven years old. Very few will be sold at 3 years old and some super stars will be sold between the ages of 8 and 12 years old.
- 14 The 658 stables proposed are required and necessary for a facility of this scale. The stables will house the approximately 100 horses that will be on site at any one time (although this will vary), as well as cater for additional horses brought on for the annual sales event (which will comprise of other horses for sale from offsite, and the horses of prospective purchasers which they can test against the horses for sale).
- 15 With this breeding future comes a huge need for a top class equine veterinary practice. This needs to have facilities that meet the demands of the best scientific equipment in the world. The top dollars will only be paid when the buyer can be as sure as they can that the young horse will stay sound for its competition life which will on average be from approximately five to 16 years old. This can only be obtained by using the top machines to show the buyer what they require. As there is no such practice in the South it makes sense to have this based at the venue. Top equine vets are very rare in New Zealand and the vets from the United States will require this equipment and facilities.
- 16 The auction and sales complex is also a necessary component of the facility. The major sales will attract crowds of up to 500 people. The

complex will also require the indoor arena for the sales process. This has all been designed to exude quality.

- 17 The arenas are not "sports fields", they are high quality training facilities that will be used for training the young horses once they reach four years old. These are absolutely required because prospective buyers want these horses trained well before they buy. Whether its dressage, eventing or jumping the SPEC trainers will spend many hours training young horses before they go to auction. Whatever discipline that young horse ends up doing it is the preliminary flatwork in these arenas that will make the sales happen.
- 18 For young sport horses, training ideally starts at about four years old. The ideal environment needs to be provided to ensure that these young sport horses are in premium condition to begin training. Thus, breeding and developing young stock will form an integral part of SPEC's function and financial success, with both aspects having a flow on effect to the local community. Young stock can grow up in the best outdoor facilities in the world in and around Mid Canterbury.
- 19 This Proposed Equine Centre will be ideally positioned in the Ashburton district. The whole Canterbury area is the largest and most populous equestrian area in New Zealand. The sport in the South Island has progressed dramatically recently and at the recent Horse of the Year Show major titles were won from the South.
- 20 Ashburton is ideally placed, it is a very equine competitive area, it has a good population that is knowledgeable and is within one hour of New Zealand's second largest city, Christchurch, and its international airport. The airport will be widely used to not only bring buyers and trainers in but also for the rapid collection of semen and embryos from the Northern Hemisphere.
- 21 Top quality breeding and early training at the Proposed Equine Centre will produce some of the best horses in the world and as a result, will attract top quality trainers. As a result, these horses are worth hundreds of thousands of dollars. To meet this demand, a sales centre is proposed to be set up within the Proposed Equine Centre, attracting buyers from all over the world. The economic benefit to the Ashburton Area is immense. The use of modern technology will, not only help to sell the horses, but will also promote the Centre and the surrounding area, attracting the rich and famous of the equestrian world.

COMPARATIVE FACILITIES

- 22 The Karaka complex in South Auckland is owned by NZ Bloodstock and the Vela family. It is a complex built 40 years ago and is only used for the Thoroughbred and standardbred racing industry. It has

about 580 stables and a sales complex that is large and very well done. The majority of horses sold through here are yearlings, which is typical for race horses.

- 23 Racing is very different to equestrian bloodstock. The young yearlings that go through the auction process here are only taught to lead and be handled, whereas the equine bloodstock will be highly trained and developed at the age of four and five years old.
- 24 The Karaka complex has done very well over 40 years but is reciprocated in Queensland with the Magic Millions and in Sydney and Melbourne with the William Inglis and Sons auction sales all for thoroughbred auctions.
- 25 Although there are a number of world class facilities, especially in North America and Europe, such as Spruce Meadows in Canada and Aachen in Germany, at present New Zealand has nothing to compare with these. The Proposed Equine Centre has the potential to develop into a world class facility renowned for its competition, surfaces, training, and breeding. For this to happen SPEC must be given the opportunity to fully develop all aspects of the complex. As a result of this development, New Zealand and in particular, the Ashburton Area, will be offered a unique opportunity to become recognised as one of the world's leading equestrian destinations, with all the associated economic benefits.
- 26 The successful sport horse venues in the Northern Hemisphere of a comparable nature to the Proposed Equine Centre include:
- 26.1 The PSI venue in Germany with Paul Schockemöhle at the helm. This venue is huge and has facilities that make this the most successful in the world. Paul Schockemöhle is the biggest breeder and seller of horses in the world.
- 26.2 The Dutch Horse Sales complex in Kronenberg is also vast and successful. Both PSI and this complex have been operating for close on 40 years. The Dutch Sport Horse complex is good but should not be compared with PSI.
- 26.3 The new ones on the block are the American Sales complexes at the World Equestrian Centre at Ocala and the Wellington International in Florida.
- 26.4 There are also major complexes at Goresbridge in Ireland and in England at the Sport Horse Centre.

CONCLUSIONS

- 27 I have no doubt that the Proposed Equine Centre will be an invaluable addition to New Zealand's sport horse industry and that

there is currently a gap in the market for a facility of this nature and scale.

Dated: 20 March 2024

Kevin Hansen