

## **INTRODUCTION**

1. My full name is Richard George Schimpf, and I am a retired government worker.
2. I have prepared this statement of evidence on behalf of the Kapiti Equestrian Advocacy Group, Horowhenua Equestrian Advocacy Group and NZ Equestrian Advocacy Network in support of the Groups' submissions on the Otaki to North Levin (O2NL) road.
3. I am authorized to provide this evidence on their behalf.

## **QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE**

4. I have ridden horses for 30 years, first in the Wellington area, then the Kapiti Coast and now in the Horowhenua. I have extensively ridden throughout New Zealand and also ridden in the United States, India and Australia. Mainly trail riding.
5. While living on the Kapiti Coast as a member of the senior management team of the Kapiti Coast District Council, I was directly involved in the planning and community consultation in the initial development of the Kapiti expressway and the design of the multi-use pathway along it. I was a founding member and horse riding representative of the Cycling, Walking and Bridleway Committee (CWB).
6. I have been a member of the Levin & Districts Horse Trekking Club for the last 20 years and its President for the last 10.
7. I am a Life Member of both the Wellington Competitive Trail Riding Club and the Levin & Districts Horse Trekking Club as well as being an ardent supporter of Riding for the Disabled and past President of the Levin branch.

## **CODE OF CONDUCT**

8. I confirm that I have read the Expert Witness Code of Conduct set out in the Environment Court's Practice Note 2023 and will comply with it.

## **SCOPE OF EVIDENCE**

9. My statement of evidence considers the following matters in relation to the Groups' submissions on the O2NL:
  - Equestrian safety when riding on and off roads
  - Need for a safe riding connection north to south through Horowhenua
10. In preparing my evidence I have relied on the following:
  - Waka Kotahi literature and correspondence on the O2NL and the wider area of road safety
  - The submissions made by the Equestrian Groups
  - Internet searches on road safety in general and that relating to horses being ridden on public roads.
11. The scope of this statement of evidence does not extend to identifying consequential amendments needed in response to the concerns raised.

12. For ease of administration, this statement of evidence focuses only on areas of remaining concerns. Where I do not specifically address issues raised in the Groups' submission I either agree with or have a neutral stance on the recommendations made by Waka Kotahi.

13. My submission is as follows:

### **Safety for Horse Riders on and off Roads**

14. Horse riding is one of the most dangerous leisure activities. When you add the additional hazard of riding on public roads the chance of accidents involving serious injury multiplies.

15. Statistics on horse related road accidents are hard to come by especially in New Zealand, but overseas research provides a more detailed picture. A quick internet search revealed the following:

- The Royall Society for the Prevention of Accidents reported the number of road reported to police involving ridden horses were 113 in 2016, 89 in 2017, 74 in 2018 and 65 in 2019. They suggested that a high number of accidents, and near misses go unreported. They commented that horse riders riding on road prefer not to do so, but often have no choice because they need to reach a bridleway or other off road facility.
- Gov.uk website provides a hierarchy of road users, suggesting that pedestrian are the most vulnerable, followed by horse riders and then cyclists.
- Monash University in Australia produced a survey of horse related injuries to children which stated that 15% of their horse related injuries occur on roads.
- Surveys in England reported that between 60.3% and 79.1% of riders an accident or near miss, and between 6.1% and 7.7% had an person injury in the previous year when riding on public roads.

16. The point is that riding on public roads adds another level of danger to an already dangerous sport. What then can be done to alleviate this hazard? Waka Kotahi has a significant role to play in this quest.

17. In reviewing Waka Kotahi's website, I found the following entries about riding horses on public roads:

- The vision of their Road to Zero Campaign states: "Where everyone, whether they're walking, cycling, driving, motorcycling or taking public transport, can get to where they are going safely." *(They seems to have forgotten horse riding.*
- Their Strategy 2020 -2030, all 68 pages of it, and I could not find any reference to horse riders safety on public roads.
- I played all the videos on the Waka Kotahi website and could find no reference to horses being legal road users or their safety.
- When using their search engine to find information on safety for horse riders on public roads I found 10 references, however these lead me back to the same two pages, one of 7 bullet points for horse riders and one of 6 bullet points for other road users.

18. If Waka Kotahi doesn't see the safety of horse riders on public roads as a priority or even deserving of a mention in its road safety campaigns, then what can it do to improve horse riders safety? An alternative strategy may be to promote off road trails for horse riders.

19. That was the strategy employed for the two new highways in the Kapiti Coast. This has been a great outcome for the safety of equestrians on the Kapiti coast. You would logically think that this strategy would continue in the next stretch of road developed through the Horowhenua.. Whilst walkers and cyclists will be catered for with a shared pathway, horse riders are ignored and left to face the additional hazard of riding on public roads. Why should walkers and cyclist be catered for, and not have to prove any negative effects of the new road, when horse riders are required to do so to get the same consideration.

20. Horse riders deserve the same consideration as walkers and cyclists when considering off road pathways along side new highways.

#### **North/South corridors on the Kapiti and Horowhenua Coast**

21. As was noted in qualifications and experience, I was a member of the senior management team at the Kapiti Coast District Council when the prospect of a new highway through the Kapiti Coast was developed by the Council itself. The key drivers of that development was to provide an alternate north/south route as the only one at that time was Highway 1. This hit home when Kapiti was subjected to extreme flooding after a major storm and Highway 1 was blocked for some time.
22. The Council's Walkways, Cycleways, and Bridleways Committee was right behind this development as it would provide its users with a safe avenue to travel in a north/south direction.
23. I left Council's employ soon after that and before central government took over the project, but was delighted to see that, as we had proposed, a multi-use pathway was planned along the route.
24. I am aware that Council support for an extension of that multi-use pathway and strong community support had a significant part to play for the multi-use pathway to be extended onto the PP2O when it was being developed.
25. However, the Horowhenua district is in the same situation as its southern neighbours. We too have only one north/south route through the district. I cannot see how we are significantly different from the Kapiti Coast to stop the multi-use pathway at Otaki and not continue it through the Horwhenua.
26. Cyclists and walkers are being catered for in the development of the O2NL so why not horse riders. The Horwhenua being more rural, with arguably more horses than Kapiti, needs the same level of consideration as its southern neighbours.
27. Horowhenua has 10 significant horse riding facilities within a km of the proposed highway and several off-road riding venues that could be accessible by way of a multi-use pathway along the O2NL. For instance, the Tararau Forest Park in Manakau and the Gladstone Road Trig to name a couple.
28. An alterative north south connection to the highway #1 is the only way horse riders can move around the district safely. A multi-use pathway along the O2NL highway would provide the ideal solution to this problem.

Richard George Schimpf