

Akaroa Wastewater Options: Ngāi Tahu Statement

The Joint Statement of the Working Party describes the views of members on the alternative land-based waste treatment and disposal options, and identifies the preference of Ngāi Tahu for the Inner Bays option. However the Joint Statement does not comment on preferences between the land-based options and the harbour outfall option, as this was beyond the scope of the Working Party.

Ngāi Tahu wish to record our preference for either of the land-based options over an outfall to Akaroa Harbour, and the reasons for this preference.

The discharge of wastewater to Akaroa Harbour is culturally offensive. Ngāi Tahu values associated with Akaroa Harbour are strongly focused on mahinga kai¹, and the importance of the customary fishery in the harbour is recognised by a Taiāpure. The ability to harvest kaimoana from the harbour is central to the ability for marae to practice manaakitanga (hospitality, care) for visitors, and discharge of human sewage into water is incompatible with this.

Wastewater should not be put into the harbour, which is used for mahinga kai and is also a home for tribal taonga such as the pahu (Hector's dolphin).

A more appropriate way to deal with wastewater in a modern context is to pass it through or across land. One of the roles of Papatūānuku is to cleanse. By passing wastewater through or over land and allowing for natural filtration to occur, the eventual receiving water is not impaired.

Ngāi Tahu recognise that discharge to land is complicated by the availability of suitable land and acknowledge that there is a range of potential effects of any option that will need to be considered. However, we consider that eliminating discharges of contaminants to Akaroa Harbour is in the interest of other harbour users and the community as a whole, and not just tangata whenua. (For example, we note that the Akaroa Harbour Recreational Fishing Club have consistently opposed the harbour outfall option.)

The statutory direction in the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement and the Canterbury Regional Coastal Environment Plan also strongly discourages effluent disposal to coastal waters. This was recognised in the following statement by the Environment Canterbury Commissioners in their 2015 decision to decline consent for a harbour outfall:

“There is a strong policy theme running through all these statutory documents that disposal of even highly treated human effluent into the Coastal Marine Area is no longer to be regarded as a good option. Rather it is to be regarded as an option that may be necessary in some circumstances after other options have been thoroughly investigated. This theme is firmly based on the imperatives in section 6(e), section 7(a), section 7(aa) and section 8 of the [Resource Management] Act, which give specific statutory recognition of Māori cultural concerns.”

For Ngāi Tahu, it is too expensive not to discharge to land. The expense is not monetary; it is the environmental cost of an inappropriate harbour discharge that we must be concerned with. The cost to the environment, our taonga and the loss of values for future generations far outweigh the

¹ Mahinga kai refers to the customary use and management of natural resources for food and other purposes, the places where this gathering occurs and the resources themselves.

dollars. Ngāi Tahu seek an outcome which will be both regenerative and resilient and which places the health and wellbeing of people and environment first.

“Mō tātou, ā, mō ka uri ā muri ake nei.”

- For us, and our children after us.