

BEFORE THE HEARING PANEL FOR TAUPŌ DISTRICT COUNCIL

IN THE MATTER of the Resource Management Act 1991

AND

IN THE MATTER of submissions by Popeye Development Limited and
Taupō Motorsport Park (NZ) Limited on Proposed Plan
Change 42 to the Taupō District Plan relating to the Rural
and Rural Lifestyle Environments

STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF JOSIE SPILLANE
ON BEHALF OF POPEYE DEVELOPMENT LIMITED AND TAUPŌ MOTORSPORT
PARK (NZ) LIMITED
CORPORATE
17 AUGUST 2023

INTRODUCTION

- 1 My name is **Josie Spillane**. I am the Chief Executive Officer ('CEO') of Taupō Motorsport (NZ) Park, and two other Motorsport Park sites under Tony Quinn's ownership in New Zealand, being the Highlands Motorsport Park in Cromwell and Hampton Downs Motorsport Park in the Waikato.
- 2 I have been employed by Tony Quinn since 2013 and have been then overseeing the park/s since 2016.
- 3 I have a Bachelor of Commerce from Otago University.
- 4 My evidence is given on behalf of Popeye Development Limited and Taupō Motorsport (NZ) Park (collectively referred to as "**The companies**") in relation to Proposed Plan Change 42 (**PC42**) to the Taupō District Plan (**TDP**) relating to the Rural and Rural Lifestyle Environments.

TAUPO MOTORSPORT PARK

- 5 Taupo Motorsport Park (**TMP**) was acquired by Tony Quinn in 2021 and is one of New Zealand's premier motorsport parks and event centres.
- 6 Existing facilities include a newly redeveloped 3.45km international track circuit, a 400m outdoor Go Kart track and various conferencing and motorsport related facilities.
- 7 A number of events are held at TMP each year, including the Historic Grand Prix and regular track days for car and bike racers/enthusiasts.
- 8 TMP is committed to continuing to develop the site as a world class facility that attracts visitors from around the country and the world. However, to do this we need certainty and the ability to evolve over time. We also need to protect our existing investments and authorised activities from incompatible land use activities, subdivision and development within the surrounding area.

MANAGEMENT OF THE MOTORSPORT PARK

- 9 We believe based on the various challenges that other motorsport parks have experienced with residential creep both here in NZ and Australia and our own experience in New Zealand, the proposal to rezone the land along Centennial Drive from Rural to Rural Lifestyle poses a significant risk to our operations at TMP.

- 10 The proposed rezoning is also incompatible with other existing land use activities and development in the surrounding area, including renewable electricity generation activities and large-scale recreational activities (including a motorsport park, horse racing track and an aerodrome).
- 11 We know from experience that the more residents we have within the immediate proximity of the TMP, the more people we effect and the more difficult it becomes to manage. Even a small number (2-3) of disgruntled neighbours can have a significant impact on our business.
- 12 For example, in 2015 consenting at our Highlands Park Motorsport Park cost Highlands Park in the order of \$750,000. Most of those costs arose due to the complaints and submissions from two or three landowners.
- 13 Reverse sensitivity issues and fractious relationships with neighbours have proved to be hugely costly both in terms of time and money and social license to operate; and affect the ability of the Motorsport Park to attract new events and develop and evolve the business into the future.
- 14 We had to close our restaurant at Highlands Park because of these issues – ultimately complaints and the constraints imposed on us to address these issues meant that aspect of our business could not operate profitably. The restaurant was subsequently closed, and the building was sold and moved off site.
- 15 Based on other circuits experiences elsewhere, the proposal to rezone the land along Centennial Drive to Rural Lifestyle could create significant uncertainty for the TMP, and the potential for some events and commercial opportunities to be declined or abandoned. Our decisions are strongly influenced by the complaints that we are responding to at the relevant time and a desire to ‘avoiding kicking the hornets’ nest’. They are difficult to predict or quantify in advance and they are insidious. The more homes that are permitted to built around the perimeter of the park increases the likelihood of complaints, regardless of our compliance.

PROPOSAL TO REZONE THE LAND ALONG CENTENNIAL DRIVE

- 16 The proposal to rezone the land along Centennial Drive from Rural to Rural Lifestyle has the potential to impact upon the residents expectations with respect to the existing (lawfully established) Motorsport Park activities.
- 17 Our previous experiences have demonstrated that people living in a rural lifestyle environment have different expectations around noise and amenity to those living in a rural environment.
- 18 People also perceive noise very differently and it can be difficult for lay people to distinguish between noise that is audible to them and noise that is in breach of a consent condition. This leads to a large number of complaints that inevitably get referred to us to respond to whether fairly or not. The costs in time and money, along with the operational risk of this can be significant.

OTHER MOTORSPORT PARK EXAMPLES

- 19 Concerns around incompatible land use activities located in close proximity to one another and potential reverse sensitivity effects are a common theme for motorsport venues throughout New Zealand, and there are a number of examples where this has played out.
- 20 For example, Ruapuna Speedway in Christchurch was forced into an extensive resource management process (establishing a site-specific zone) that resulted in significant constraints on their operations. This was largely due to new people moving into existing dwellings without doing their homework.
- 21 Historically Ruapuna had almost no controls on their operation giving them a high level of flexibility to operate. They now need to accommodate the following controls:
 - (a) No race vehicles on Monday's. They are restricted to road car driver training and events such as running or cycling.
 - (b) Between October – March there must be at least 10 'quiet weekend days' – this has essentially forced the track to close on these days because they are unable to carry out any viable activity within the limits.
 - (c) They must close over the Christmas and New Year period.

- (d) Drag racing is restricted to 5 days per year.
- (e) Activity is restricted to 9am-6pm, except for 5 days per year where activity can continue till 8pm.

22 From my discussions with Ruapuna it is clear that these new restrictions have had a significant impact on their flexibility to accommodate activities. Whilst the overall number of days is not overly problematic, it is the combination of controls that limits their flexibility and thwarts their operation.

23 Similar issues have also arisen at Western Springs in Auckland, Bay Park Raceway in Mount Maunganui, Manfield Track in Fielding and at the now closed Pukekohe Track.

CONCLUSION

24 The proposal to create a RLE at the eastern end of Centennial Drive is strongly opposed by TMP.

25 In our view the land along Centennial Drive is a highly inappropriate location for rural residential activities.

26 Long after the land has been rezoned, TMP and the residents within the RLE zone will be left with the fall out of having highly incompatible activities located in close proximity to each other.

27 Reinforcing the ongoing existence of rural residential development in this location has the potential to adversely impact upon the existing land use activities and development within the TMP and the potential for these activities to develop or expand in the future.

28 The existing Rural Environment zoning should be retained along Centennial Drive.