

## **Personal Statement : Susanne Elizabeth Payne for DA & S E Payne Submitter #160**

9 July 2025

Good afternoon, Commissioners,

Peelview Orchard has been a commercial orchard since 1928. Next month it will be 30 years since my husband and I took over its ownership. Over the course of those 30 years, we have faced our share of challenges – those thrown at us by the weather including late frosts, vicious hail storms, gale force winds and seasons like the last one with never ending rain, but growers by nature are perpetual optimists – the next season will always be better.

The world we operate in has also changed greatly, with massive industry and market changes to adapt to. But society's expectations of farmers and growers have also changed – lots has been written about the rural/urban divide.

During the time of Covid, business was told that they would need to "pivot". In truth, in our 30 years orcharding we've performed more "pivots" than a ballerina but the reality is that there just are no more pivots that we can perform with our growing operation. As Stuart Ford has modelled with his HPL assessment there is nothing we can produce on the property that would be sustainably profitable and that doesn't require additional cash support from other sources of income.

It was the phone call I received though at 9:30am on the 24<sup>th</sup> February this year from the Compliance Officer – Resource Management and Bylaws at the Timaru District Council advising that he had received 2 complaints from 2 different neighbours over the preceding weekend in relation to the use of our bird scarer to protect our crop that confirmed for me that I just do not have the emotional resilience to grow another crop. It brought into stark relief that our needs as a horticultural business are just not compatible with those of our neighbours.

The season we have just completed will be the last for Peelview Orchard. The removal of the remaining trees is underway which is sad as we have nurtured them for so long but it is the only rational decision we can make. Obviously, this decision sees us foregoing income as well and this will make things difficult for us but we will manage, just as we always have.

Despite our resilience to all the challenges we have faced over the years, the District Plan Review process has been particularly gruelling. Back in 2020 TDC asked for feedback from residents on a Draft Plan which we provided. When the Plan was notified and was totally different to what we'd seen previously we submitted. Naively I viewed this, as did Mrs Kellahan (#26), Mr Harper (#109) Mr Robertson (further Submitter #273) and the Joint Submitter Group (#108) as leading to the correction of what we all viewed as an illogical, unreasonable and frankly indefensible zoning for the area. I want to acknowledge the Statements provided to the Panel by Mr Harper and Mr Robertson who remain interested parties to this Hearing but are unavailable to present personally.

So why is it that our property has been used as the proxy for the entire Main North Road, Templer Street and Bennett Road area? This process has caused us significant stress and unfortunately costs that we can ill afford. We totally agree with submitter Mrs Lee Burdon's comments about the inaccessibility of planning processes. Reflecting back 5 years ago, knowing what I know now, would I engage in this process? It's an entirely rhetorical question because we are at this point but if Council is sincere in its stated intent to engage genuinely with its community and listen to its views, I do

think it needs to reflect long and hard on this Plan's evolution and development and how it can make massive improvements for its next District Plan Review process.

Our hope is that the Commissioners will recognise the changes that have already occurred over the entire Main North Road, Templer Street and Bennett Road area that have so massively affected our property and will appreciate and understand the real-world impacts this has had on us as it considers the recommendations of Mr Bonis. Also though, that they direct their attention to the inconsistencies across the Plan in the various chapters that Ms Wharfe has raised in her evidence during 4 Hearings and give the required certainty to Plan users.

We have been good custodians of the property over all these years – we treasure it as our whenua. We have put in significant work to improve the water quality through initiatives like the significant riparian planting we have undertaken. We eventually want to see sympathetic development here that maintains the environment and specialness of this place and responds to the contours of the land and its natural features and established trees etc rather than an unsympathetic development due to some blunt, highly prescriptive lot size rule.

We want Council to reserve sufficient flexibility within its Planning framework to ensure that the precious resource of this land can be used efficiently but also become a place for other families to live and grow as part of a thriving Geraldine community. It has served its time as an orchard, 97 years in fact, but it is no longer sustainable for this to continue.

And as my final note about family, I want to acknowledge our two children, Ben and Olivia who are here with me today. They have accompanied us on this 30-year journey. They grew up with parents who were often not particularly “present” for them and were also frequently pretty stressed and this certainly shaped them. Despite this, they have grown into impressive, highly accomplished but also hugely empathetic young people and David and I could not be more proud of them.

Now that we have done all that we feel we can to contribute to the Plan Review process and have left everything we have here on the table, I look forward to giving my attention to helping my daughter organise her November wedding.

Thank you for listening Commissioners.