

## INTRODUCTORY SPOKEN STATEMENT

### ELLESMERE SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE INCORPORATED

Strategic Directions Hearing 1, Tuesday 10 August 2021

#### Carey Barnett

Tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou katoa - Hello everybody and warm greetings to you.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today and answer any questions you may have.

Ellesmere Sustainable Agriculture Inc has a 20 year history in representing predominantly family farmers in the Ellesmere district between the Rakaia and Selwyn Rivers. The group's focus has been on creating positive outcomes for farmers and the environment in our area -the promise of making actual improvements 'on the ground' as opposed to continued concentration on further regulation. The Group has actively participated in this district plan review. Its ethos is to pro-actively engage with authorities in achieving outcomes for the environment that work in practice and deliver the best environmental outcomes. This is the theme of all our submissions on this plan.

This focus has led to the group submitting two applications for funding from the Ministry for Primary Industries and the Ministry for the Environment both concentrating on riparian restoration and waterway improvement at the same time encouraging excellence in farming practice. I'm very pleased to report both these applications were granted under The 'Tinaku – Germinate Growth' Project and its further extension project.

The projects will result in approximately \$3M being spent on improvement works along lowland streams, baseline waterway monitoring and the creation of an environmental database for our area. It is a non-regulatory project that involves not only our farmers but close connections with the Selwyn District Council, Environment Canterbury, the Department of Conservation, Ministries for Primary Industries and the Environment, Te Taumutu Runaka and a variety of other interest groups including local schools and the community. The Group is very excited about this project which has already seen the completion of 15 riparian sites along our streams since November 2020 and the employment of 50 people, seven of which are full time equivalent. While the group doesn't actively seek awards either, it was very humbled to receive a Gold Award recently at the Selwyn Awards evening.

ESAI cannot express strongly enough the importance and success of non-regulatory activity and pro-active consultation in supporting and improving environmental and farming outcomes. The Group remains concerned that further regulation will hinder investment in environmental improvement on the ground. These concerns have led to it submitting on the 'Strategic Directions' Chapter of the Plan. The Group envisages this chapter as being a fundamental and positive support to rural activity, especially given the large rural area contained within the Selwyn District. In its view the Plan should be *'By the District, For the District'* and promote a thriving rural area.

Thank you and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.