

Before the Independent Commissioner  
Appointed by the Selwyn District Council

Under	the Resource Management Act 1991
In the matter of	a hearing on submissions to the Partially Operative Selwyn District Plan, Variation 2: Levi Road rezoning
Between	<b>Foodstuffs (South Island) Properties Limited</b>  Applicant

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**Statement of Evidence of Murray Grant Smith**

7 March 2025

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**Applicant's solicitors:**

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## Introduction

- 1 My full name is Murray Grant Smith. I am a director and shareholder of Smiths Hardware Limited (**Smith's Mitre 10**), along with my two brothers – Andrew and Richard. We own and operate Mitre 10 stores on the west-side of Christchurch, including Mitre 10 stores in Hornby, Papanui and Beckenham, which is soon to be replaced by our new Brougham Street store. I have been involved with Smith's Mitre 10 for approximately 40 years.
- 2 Smith's Mitre 10 seek to purchase part of 157 Levi Road, Rolleston (**the Site**). Our intention is for that part of the Site to be the location of our new Mitre 10 Rolleston.
- 3 My evidence is therefore provided to support Foodstuffs' request to rezone the Site from Medium Density Residential Zone to Large Format Retail Zone.
- 4 I am authorised to provide evidence on behalf of Smith's Mitre 10, and I have prepared evidence in relation to our company, our Rolleston proposal, our operational and functional requirements, and our commitment to work with Foodstuffs to ensure good outcomes on this strategically located Site for Rolleston.

## Smith's Mitre 10

- 5 We are a locally and family owned and operated company supplying hardware to the west side of Christchurch since 1964. We are proud to be a long-term family business who does what they say.
- 6 The company was started by our father, Reg Smith, and we have been deeply rooted in our local community since then. This close community connection is at the centre of making our business successful, and why our strong preference is to be located on this Site, as opposed to being distant from the residential community (across the road in the industrial area). The Rolleston residential community will be our customers.
- 7 We go the extra mile for our team members and our customers, a few examples include:
  - (a) We have a proud history of supporting hundreds of local community activities every year;
  - (b) We run an annual community fun day and offer regular kids weekend workshops;
  - (c) We make an extra effort with our café and outdoor garden areas. We are a favourite spot for many a senior walking, and now e-cycling groups, plus people bringing their parents in from the nearby rest homes;

- (d) The playground areas at our stores are something which is special to us. Every week we have many a young parents' group sitting around the playground having a latte watching the kids use up their energy.
- 8 It's the numerous small things that are the real difference between us and other internationally owned corporates. We have a proven track record of success and recognition in our communities and in our industry. Specifically:
- (a) Our team culture is constantly one of the best in the Mitre 10 Mega group;
  - (b) Our Papanui store (opened in 2016) is currently the number one hardware store in the country, as voted by the New Zealand Hardware Industry – this is an award we have won six out of the last eight years, and held consistently since 2020;
  - (c) We believe in developing youth, with three of our young people recently winning the top award in the country for Young Achievers in the Hardware Industry. One of these has just been appointed to the General Manager's role of the new Brougham Street store;
  - (d) Our stores are normally amongst the highest Google-rated large format DIY store in the country.
- 9 Along with the businesses, it is important to us that we own the buildings and land our stores operate from. We feel this has been a large part of our longevity. We are proud of our sites, which we continually (over decades) reinvest in – making sure they meet the demands of the community. For instance, this ownership allows us to ensure that our onsite café, garden areas and playgrounds can be utilised by the community. Our cafés are popular with our communities. We're able to book tables for groups providing a local spot for larger senior walking and biking groups to catch up for tea and a scone.

### **Rolleston proposal**

- 10 Our Rolleston Mitre 10 Proposal (**Proposal**) is detailed across the evidence of the expert team we have engaged, including our architect – Bernard Johnston. We have been looking for a site for some time in Rolleston township, and have been unsuccessful in finding a location which achieves our requirements like this Site does. Our site requirements have been briefly set out by Mr Johnston in his evidence.
- 11 In essence, our aim is to establish a Mitre 10 that can work with the under construction PAK'nSAVE Rolleston to service the wider Selwyn District and avoid unnecessary travel into Christchurch. To make this work we need our design and operation to reflect the requirements of a Mitre 10 (being a large domestic retail offering), while also fitting seamlessly into the community.

- 12 There are a number of benefits to the proposed Rolleston Mitre 10, including:
- (a) Our team and especially our senior team are locals and live in the community. The new store will provide approximately 65 full-time equivalent staff, and we already have a General Manager planned for the store who has been a Rolleston resident for 15+ years;
  - (b) We have observed the significant residential growth and the huge unmet demand for our products in the Rolleston community;
  - (c) A Mitre 10 store next to PAK'nSAVE Rolleston is logical and has been very successful in the past, including at Henderson, Te Awamutu and Queenstown. In my view the Te Awamutu site has strong parallels to this Site, being a smaller town closer to a larger city. It has served the community extremely well since opening in 2011 by enabling Te Awamutu residents to shop locally without having to travel further to Hamilton without detracting from the retailing and other activities of the town centre. It has become a real asset to the local community. The 'cross-shopping' between both stores reduces vehicle movements and provides a major draw card for consumers to shop within the Rolleston township – rather than spending their money in Christchurch. There are no existing hardware stores in the Rolleston Town Centre;
  - (d) Establishing a Mitre 10 ensures there is not a cluster of smaller retail on the Site, which might attract customers from the Rolleston town centre. As detailed in our expert evidence, we are applying similar amenity controls that the PAK'nSAVE Rolleston has between their supermarket activity and the adjacent future residences (for example, setbacks and a large biodiversity landscaping strip).

#### **Operational and functional requirements**

- 13 The main driver for a store like Mitre 10, which is mainly retail based, is location. There are also operational and functional requirements for a retail offering of our size, particularly given our commitment to own and take pride in our sites.
- 14 The location at Rolleston is strategic in its proximity to PAK'nSAVE Rolleston, on an arterial transport network, and its catchment of Selwyn customers. Location is also important to our customers and it is important to our team:
- (a) Being closer to where the customers live makes car journeys shorter and makes it possible for people to visit the store via public transport, by foot or cycle. Further, for a retail store like Mitre 10 to successfully encourage the Rolleston area customers away from traveling into Christchurch city, travel needs to be perceived to be very easy and convenient – much easier to overcome the draw of the city with its additional attractions;

- (b) The Rolleston store will be residential DIY focused rather than trade focused. Similar to PAK'nSAVE, the Mitre 10 will be focused on the customers' everyday needs, being the same customer as PAK'n SAVE;
  - (c) As we are a large employer, and most of our team will live locally, it is important that we are located close to where they live – so that they can walk and bike to the store and not be dependent on vehicle transport. This is especially important as we are a large employer of students that may not have access to a vehicle.
- 15 A Mitre 10 store requires a large area for the retail floor, café and garden centre offering, associated car parking and trade entrances and so on. Our stores have a high level of connectivity across sites, providing pedestrian/cycle links to the communities we serve. In contrast, truck deliveries and unloading operations require a separate, controlled area, with limitations on public access to ensure customer safety. By nature, these back of house areas are not highly visible. It is important that any public access areas are open and easily observed to keep customers safe. Foodstuffs takes a similar approach to its operations, enabling a consistent approach across the Site.
- 16 Given our requirement to own the land and buildings for new stores it can be difficult to find an appropriate site of the size needed (that is not a greenfield site). It does not meet our site requirements to locate the Mitre 10 within the existing Large Format Retail Zone or industrial part of Rolleston, including due to our customer base.

#### **Commitment to work with Foodstuffs**

- 17 I have already noted the 'cross-shopping' between both stores provides a major draw card for consumers to shop within the Rolleston township, while not competing with the existing Rolleston retail area. I consider that this pairing will aid in pulling retail spend from Christchurch back into Selwyn, and note there is limited available commercial land within Rolleston to do this, and no available land large enough in the Rolleston Town Centre. There is benefit to both Foodstuffs and us to work together and ensure that this Proposal proceeds.
- 18 We are already working proactively with Foodstuffs to ensure that our Proposal for Mitre 10 Rolleston integrates with their development under construction, and the surrounding residential environment. Working with the Foodstuffs' team around providing consistent design treatment and appropriate integration has so far been successful and helpful – particularly given the consented PAK'nSAVE serves as a starting point, to ensure that our Proposal is (likewise) consistent with maintaining surrounding residential amenity.

## **Conclusion**

- 19 We consider that the Site is well placed for our new Mitre 10 store, and we are putting in substantial effort to ensure that we can provide the community offering that we are now renowned for. The future Mitre 10 Proposal that Variation 2 will enable will ensure appropriate community amenity and good urban design. We trust the Commissioner recognises the quality offering we can bring to Rolleston, and rezones the Site to Large Format Retail to enable us to do so.

**Murray Grant Smith**