

Summary Statement of Gary Turner

Kia ora Commissioner, and thank you for the opportunity to speak here today.

My name is Gary Turner. I've worked for Bunnings for 10 years and currently hold the role of Head of Property for New Zealand.

I've been directly involved in this project since March 2024, which has included oversight of the resource consent application, design development and stakeholder engagement.

Whilst Dan has spoken about Bunnings' engagement with Ngāti Tāwhirikura Hapū and Puketapu Hapū, I don't intend to repeat the detail of his evidence. But I think it's important to briefly explain how that engagement informed the physical changes I'll address.

Before I do that, I'd like to give some brief context on how we came to acquire the site, our presence in New Zealand and the contribution we try to make to the communities in which we operate.

Bunnings has been looking for a suitable site for a full-sized Warehouse in New Plymouth for a long time. In fact, New Plymouth was identified as a target location for a larger Warehouse in 2014, but until this site became available, we hadn't been able to find a site that met our requirements.

A development of this scale needs a substantial parcel in the right location, with the right zoning, good visibility and suitable access. This site gave us that opportunity. It comprises 7.3 hectares, is appropriately zoned for the proposed use, is in a prominent location on the corner of Devon Road and Smart Road facing the State Highway, and gives us the ability to provide multiple customer and service access points.

Bunnings entered into an agreement with the former landowner in late 2022 to purchase the site, subject to a number of conditions. Those conditions were subsequently satisfied and we settled the purchase in January 2024. Since then, we've been progressing the planning and design work for the proposed replacement Bunnings Warehouse.

That investment in New Plymouth sits within Bunnings' much broader and long-standing commitment to New Zealand. This year we celebrated 25 years of operating here, and during that time supporting the communities in which we operate has become an important part of who we are.

Our stores work alongside community organisations, schools, sports clubs and charities through fundraising, partnerships and practical support. Over the past five years alone, Bunnings New Zealand has contributed to and helped raise more than \$13 million through more than 29,000 community activities.

Our philosophy is pretty simple: we live and work in the same communities as our customers, and we want to make a positive contribution to those communities.

The proposed New Plymouth Warehouse is another example of that long-term commitment. Once operational, we expect it to employ around 150 team members. About 75 of those will transfer from our existing smaller-format store and Trade Centre, with approximately 75 new jobs expected to be created.

So, for Bunnings, this project is about more than replacing our existing stores with a new Warehouse. It's a significant investment in New Plymouth, in our local team and in the community we're part of.

That commitment to being part of the community is also important in the context of this application. We recognised that developing this site meant we needed to understand and respond to the views of those with a particular connection to this place.

That brings me back to our engagement with Ngāti Tāwhirikura and Puketapu, and importantly, how that engagement influenced the design that's now before you.

Engagement with Ngāti Tāwhirikura began in September 2023 and continued through hui, the sharing of plans and technical material, site visits and discussions about landscape, cultural expression, stormwater, access, sightlines and the relationship with the Pā site.

When Ngāti Tāwhirikura advised in June 2024 that its views may not have been fully understood, Bunnings chose not to lodge the application at that stage. Instead, we allowed more time for consultation, shared draft consent material and plans, and undertook additional survey and visual assessment work.

We obtained approval from the hapū to survey the Pā site by drone, and a site visit was undertaken with a hapū representative to identify the viewpoints and visual connections that needed particular consideration. Those identified viewpoints were then incorporated into the visual assessment and 3D modelling of revised development options.

Bunnings also engaged with Puketapu Hapū, although, we acknowledged that this engagement should have started earlier; we apologised for that delay, and continued to offer hui and site meetings.

A site hui was subsequently held to discuss the cultural context, visual connections, design opportunities, archaeology and stormwater management, and relevant draft material was provided for review.

I acknowledge that the engagement didn't resolve every concern and didn't result in agreement. But it wasn't simply an information-sharing exercise. It influenced the design work, delayed lodgement while further work was undertaken, and resulted in practical changes to the proposal.

Those physical changes are what I'll now address.

The proposal before you today is materially different from where we started.

The original 2022 concept was substantially a standard Bunnings format. As concerns regarding Pā site and its relationship with the surrounding cultural landscape became clearer, we didn't simply acknowledge those concerns and carry on with our original design.

We tested the proposal and we changed it.

That work included modelling the proposal against identified viewpoints. The assessment showed that part of the original garden centre canopy affected the identified visual connection between the Pā site and the Pou.

In response, Bunnings amended the garden centre and trade areas, reduced the building footprint and gave up the future expansion area at the trade end of the store to maintain that sightline.

We've taken the same approach with the rear access adjoining the Pā. The earlier designs contemplated a two-way access or stub road capable of connecting with Council's proposed future link road. That arrangement required retaining works near the boundary with the Pā site. Concerns have been raised about the effects of that arrangement.

Since the plans forming part of this application were prepared and in response to the submissions, Bunnings has put forward a reduction in the width of the access closest to the Pā which eliminates the retaining wall.

That further consideration is shown on the plans before you today.

It reflects our continued effort to respond to the concerns raised about that sensitive interface.

I make that point because, for me, it demonstrates something important. Our response hasn't been confined to simply meeting the minimum design requirements or defending the design we started with. We've continued looking for practical opportunities to reduce effects where we reasonably can.

Where that leaves us

Commissioner, I recognise that Ngāti Tāwhirikura and Puketapu continue to have concerns.

I also recognise that we haven't reached agreement on every issue.

But agreement and meaningful engagement aren't necessarily the same thing.

What I ask you to consider is Bunnings' conduct and, importantly, the outcome of that conduct in the design that's now before you.

- We listened.
- We modelled the identified sightlines.
- We changed the building.
- We reduced future expansion potential.
- We changed the rear access design
- We removed the associated retaining wall requirement.
- We retained the existing contour beside the Pā.
- We've now put forward a further reduction of the access width closest to the Pā.

Those are tangible responses.

Bunnings has tried to approach this as a responsible long-term member of the community.

Being a good corporate citizen doesn't mean that every party will ultimately agree with each and every part of a proposal.

What It does mean is listening, responding, accepting reasonable compromises and continuing to look for better outcomes.

In my view, that's what Bunnings has tried to do here.

We respect the concerns that have been put before the Commissioner.

At the same time, I believe the proposal should be assessed on the design and mitigation now being put forward, rather than the proposal as it existed at the beginning of this journey.

We genuinely believe we've arrived at a considered and responsible outcome.

One that responds appropriately to the issues raised, while still allowing this significant investment in New Plymouth to proceed.

Kia ora.