

Summary statement of Daniel Siciliano

My name is Daniel Siciliano. I have worked for Bunnings for 12 years and currently hold the role of Māori Engagement Lead. In that role, I support Bunnings' relationships and engagement with Māori communities, iwi, hapū and other stakeholders, and provide cultural support across the business. I have been involved in this project since September 2023, supporting engagement with Ngāti Tāwhirikura Hapū and Puketapu Hapū and working alongside the project team throughout the consultation process.

While not directly relevant to my evidence, I grew up spending much of my life in Taranaki before later moving to the Waikato. As a result, I have a strong personal appreciation for the region, its communities.

Bunnings has been part of the Taranaki community long before I joined the business. Our Hāwera store opened in 2012 and, less than 12 months later, we opened our New Plymouth store on Molesworth Street in the same year. Our trade site on Corbett Rd has a much longer history dating back to the late 1970s. Originally operating as MSD Speirs, the business later became a Benchmark store. It subsequently joined the Bunnings family in 2001 following acquisition of Howard Smith Limited, which included the Benchmark business.

I think it is fair to say that Bunnings has had a longstanding presence in the Taranaki region and has been serving local customers and tradespeople for a significant period of time.

It also highlights that we have been operating from the same locations for a long time. Over that period, the industry has evolved, product ranges have changed, and the needs of the communities we serve have continued to grow.

Over that time, the region, the industry and customer expectations have continued to evolve. While our current sites have served the community well, they do not provide the complete modern warehouse-format offer available in many other parts of New Zealand. The proposed development represents an investment of approximately \$70 million in the Taranaki region and would provide a modern warehouse-format store capable of better meeting the needs of customers, tradespeople and the wider community. It would provide an expanded product range, improved customer amenities, enhanced trade services and increase employment from approximately 75 team members currently to around 150 positions and ultimately allow us to support the community better.

My evidence focuses primarily on engagement with Ngāti Tāwhirikura Hapū and Puketapu Hapū. We appreciated the opportunity both hapū provided to meet, listen and discuss the proposal over an extended period. Those discussions covered a wide range of matters, including the relationship with Aotere Pā, visual connections across the site, landscape design, cultural expression, signage, planting and wider opportunities for collaboration.

Throughout our discussions, we shared examples of cultural initiatives that Bunnings has successfully delivered in partnership with iwi and hapū in other locations. These examples were intended to help inform the conversation and explore opportunities that may have been appropriate for this site. We always remained open to feedback, refinement, and further suggestions throughout the engagement process.

Our conversations explored opportunities that could help reflect the cultural context of the site, drawing on initiatives that Bunnings has successfully delivered at other locations. These included the use of locally appropriate planting within landscape and carpark areas, the incorporation of te reo Māori within fixed site signage that reflects the local mīta, cultural narratives and storytelling, artwork, and opportunities for landscape co-design.

We also explored the inclusion of a pou as a significant cultural feature for the site. While a pou would represent a new initiative for Bunnings, we were genuinely excited by the opportunity to incorporate a taonga of this nature and to work collaboratively with mana whenua on how it could be appropriately developed and represented within the proposal.

These opportunities were presented as a basis for discussion, with the intention of identifying outcomes that reflected both the local cultural context and the aspirations expressed through the engagement process.

Importantly, the engagement process informed the evolution of the proposal. My colleague Gary Turner will discuss the physical design changes in more detail, the feedback received through consultation contributed to amendments to the site's design, layout and landscape treatment as the project developed.

I also wish to acknowledge that agreement was not reached on all matters and that both Ngāti Tāwhirikura Hapū and Puketapu Hapū continue to hold concerns regarding the proposal.

Finally, Bunnings views engagement as an ongoing responsibility rather than something that ends when an application is lodged or determined. Should the project proceed, we remain committed to continuing dialogue and working constructively with mana whenua on the opportunities that may arise through this development