



**Ministry for the Environment**

PO Box 10362  
Wellington 6143  
New Zealand

**14 July 2022**

Tēnā koe e te rangatira,

**RE: Housing/Village Development at the Ōtaki Racecourse**

***“Moe ana te mata hī tuna, ara ana te kitaua.”***

*(Eel catchers may sleep, but sentries do not.)*

You will no doubt be aware of the incumbent housing/village development resource consent applications that are being lodged by The Wellington Company/Ōtaki Revisited Limited. Obviously, we wish to formally signal our support for the project, but I thought it more prudent to provide a bit of background on us and highlight how the development initiative is imperative for our historic racing club.

Officially formed in 1886, the Ōtaki-Māori Racing Club is now the only Māori-governed racing club in existence. Throughout the years we have faced a lot of challenges, but more so in the last couple of decades due to a severe decline in the New Zealand racing industry as a whole.

In 2007 we joined RACE Incorporated, who manage a number of racing clubs based in the central districts. We thought their management model would assist us to improve our financial position and presence within the industry, but sadly it ended up being the worst 10 years of financial performance our Club had ever endured, and their poor administration left us with a lot of unnecessary capital expenditure most of which related to remedial work of our track, buildings, and grounds.

In 2017 our committee unanimously agreed to contract my son, Ben Jamison, to assist with the Clubs' departure from RACE Incorporated, stabilise and improve the Clubs financial position, and formulate and begin a number of non-racing revenue streams. Since he began, the departure from RACE Inc was successfully achieved, a number of non-racing projects have been put in place to assist with the increase of revenue, and I am pleased to announce that we are currently tracking to report our first profit in over 15 years at the end of this coming racing financial year.

In 2018 we began exploring options for the site including looking at a range of development options including housing which would help support the activities of the Club. It was however deemed the scale and required commitment to deliver a scaled development was outside of the expertise or capacity of the Club.

It was at about this time that the Racing Industry Act started seeing major legislative change and even more pressure was put on racing clubs to not only survive, but thrive, in order to continue operation. We were shortly thereafter approached by New Zealand Thoroughbred Racing (NZTR) expressing

concerns that we were operating whilst insolvent, but they did not provide any factual evidence behind this. Nevertheless, they subsequently threatened to have our race licences removed on two separate occasions because of this supposed insolvency. It appeared that 'overnight' NZTR now had the power to force us, or any other thoroughbred racing club in the country, to cease holding any race meetings and sell their assets as they see fit (and keep the profits). It seemed we were one of their first 'targets'. Fortunately, this threat never eventuated into anything, but the matter only exacerbated our need to solidify our financial position and become sustainable in the long term.

We then approached Ian Cassels, who is well known to myself and my son, to see if he would be interested in partnering to develop the site and he has been nothing but enthusiastic and generous towards us since agreeing to take on the development. The advantage of working with a developer like Ian Cassels (and The Wellington Company) is that their focus on community enhancement and environmental longevity is paramount; and most importantly there is alignment with our longer-term vision of being sustainable and delivering a great community outcome. The company have a sincere and genuine understanding of our Clubs uniqueness and history as well as our community and its people. This is just one of the many reasons we engaged Ian and his team to undertake the development with us.

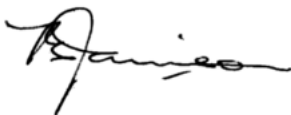
During our work with Ian and his team, we have since sold three parcels of our land for them to develop, totalling around 12% of our total landholdings (circa 7.5 hectares) and will look to long term lease to them a further circa 7.5 hectares for further residential and commercial development.

In summation, regardless of the smaller successes we have seen in the last 5 years, the short and long-term financial benefits that the proposed housing/village development will provide us is still imperative in order for our unique and historic Club to thrive in the long run. Without this, it will still be a matter of day-to-day and the cloud of uncertainty for our future will remain hanging over our head.

We therefore as a Club fully support the development proposed by TWC and seek referral by the Ministry for Environment to the Minister for Environment for this development.

I am happy to discuss this matter further at any time and can be contacted via our General Manager, Ben Jamison, via email at [s 9\(2\)\(a\)](#)

Nāku noa, nā,



**Tom Jamison**  
President  
Ōtaki-Māori Racing Club