

## **Crown Pastoral Land Tenure Review**

**Lease name: THE LARCHES**

**Lease number: PO 254**

### **Public Submissions - Part 3**

These submissions were received as a result of the public advertising of the Preliminary Proposal for Tenure Review.

**November**

**08**

**Protective Mechanisms:**

**(a) A conservation covenant of approximately 18 hectares pursuant to sections 40(1)(b) and 40(2)(a) Crown Pastoral Land Act 1998 for the purpose of preserving the natural environment and landscape.**

We understand this proposal to refer to about 18 ha of shrubland close to the eastern boundary of the property below the gate at about 700 m. This corresponds closely to an area identified in the FMC Report (2001) which was recommended for protection and was described as an area of shrubland which significantly adds to the biodiversity of the slopes. FMC is pleased to note that such an area is now proposed for protection through this tenure review.

It is not clear from the proposal whether this area is fenced, or how the shrublands will be protected from stock damage. It is however, implied by Special Condition 1, and the revised version of Clause 3.1.1 that sheep and cattle may wander into the land. If the grazing pressure on adjacent pasture land is increased following tenure review, the threat of adverse effects due to stock will also be greater. A monitoring regime must be devised and implemented to measure any stock damage. If increasing adverse effects of grazing on the natural values of the shrublands are recorded, then fencing should be erected (as provided for in Special Condition 2, and Clause 3.2.6).

Field inspection has indicated that there may be additional areas of shrublands of significant inherent value within the area proposed for freeholding. We submit that consideration should be given to increasing the area of CC 1 to include such areas.

**FMC Submission**

*FMC supports the proposal that some 18 ha of mixed shrublands close to the eastern boundary of the property (designated CC 1) should be protected under a Conservation Covenant. Provision must be made for monitoring the shrublands for adverse effects of stock, and fencing erected (as provided for in Clause 3.2.6) should increasing adverse effects be recorded.*

*FMC submits that consideration should be given to increasing the area of proposed CC 1 to include other areas of shrublands with significant inherent value within the area proposed to freeholding.*

**Protective Mechanisms:**

**(b) A Conservation Covenant of approximately 180 hectares pursuant to sections 40(1)(b) and 40(2)(a) and (b) Crown Pastoral Land Act 1998 for the purpose of the protection of landscape values.**

As noted above this 180 ha area represents the balance of the area identified in the FMC Report (2001) which was recommended for protection by restoration to full Crown ownership and control. The Preliminary Proposal is that it should be protected under a Conservation Covenant but FMC submits that protection under covenant is not the most appropriate form of protection for this area which is being progressively invaded by Hieracium. For reasons explained above (unlikely to be capable of supporting ecologically sustainable pastoral use, and high conservation and recreation value), it would be more appropriately dealt with as in the same way as the top block. It is therefore recommended that this area should be added to CA 1 and be returned to full Crown ownership and control.



Clause 3 of Schedule 1 of the Covenant document appropriately describes the value and importance of the landscape within CC 2. FMC submits that this argument for landscape protection applies equally to the mid and lower slopes of the Criffel faces of The Larches (described in the Conservation Resources Report as Landscape Unit LU 2). The area described as LU 2 should therefore be protected as indicated for the proposed area CC 2

**FMC Submission**

*FMC submits that the 180 ha of the upper slopes on the Criffel faces (CC 2) should not be protected under a Conservation Covenant and should NOT be freehold as proposed, but instead should be added to CA 1 and be returned to full Crown ownership and control, as the preferred method of protection stated in the CPL Act, 1998.*

*The arguments for the protection of landscape values on the land within the proposed area CC 2 are valid and accepted. They apply equally to the whole area described as LU 2 on The Larches and it is submitted that the terms of the Covenant proposed for the area CC 2 should instead be applied to the area identified as LU 2 in the CRR.*

**Qualified Designations:**

**(a) An easement under section 36(3)(b) Crown Pastoral Land Act 1998 to provide conservation management access by non-motorised and motorised vehicles to the proposed Conservation Area.**

FMC notes that an error seems to have been made in the citation of the appropriate sections of the CPL Act under which these Qualified Designations have been made. We believe they should cite Section 40(2) as the appropriate reference.

FMC accepts that access to the upper slopes and plateau areas proposed as CA 1 and CC 2 may occasionally be required and that management use of the farm track up the middle of the front faces would be reasonable. FMC therefore has no objection to the easement proposed at (a) above.

**FMC Submission**

*FMC has no objection to the easement proposed at (a) above for conservation management purposes to the upper parts of The Larches.*

**Qualified Designations:**

**(b) An easement under section 36(3)(b) Crown Pastoral Land Act 1998 to provide public access by foot, horse and non-motorised vehicles to the proposed Conservation Area.**

FMC notes that Qualified Designation (b) is intended as an Easement for public access which is indicated on the Designations Plan as b-d-e. FMC also notes that the text of the proposal summary states "**Public Access Easement** under section 7(2) Conservation Act 1987 in perpetuity under section 40(2)(c) Crown Pastoral Land Act 1998 (shown with an orange line and labeled b-d-e on the Plan attached as Appendix 2 of this report)."

There are a number of matters which are not clear to us:- (i) There are two lines shown in orange on the Plan, one is the Public Access Easement (b-d-e) while the other is the Vehicles for Management Purposes Easement (a-b-c). On the Plan, these appear identical apart from the letters a, b, c, d, and e themselves. (ii) There appears to be no way for the public to gain access to point (b) from the Mt Barker Road. Furthermore, field inspection has revealed that access between points (b) and (d) is not practicable because of a steeply eroded gully, and a very narrow remaining strip of land above the gully, adjacent to the fence.



These matters need to be resolved because this easement is important for recreation and will provide access to the Pisa Conservation area for a wide variety of activities. The access would also be beneficial for back country skiers, and snow shoe winter recreation.

We understand from the holder, Jamie Robertson, that the intention is for an unformed legal road from Mt Barker Road to point (b) to become the public access from the road. This would be preferable to the other possible alternative which would use the same route through the farm operational area as the Easement for Management Purposes (viz a-b).

Field inspection also revealed that the preferred public access would be closer to the boundary fence on the true right of the steep and eroded gully. There is a good practicable line through open vegetation which lies within the proposed 150 m wide strip adjacent to the NE boundary of the property. Good practicable public access from Mt Barker Road to point (d) needs to be established before the tenure review of The Larches is finalised.

The proposal for public non-motorised access runs adjacent to the NE boundary of the property and consists of a strip of land 150 m wide to accommodate the future formation of a track suitable for foot, horse and mountain bike use. While this access appears steep, and less desirable for public use than the farm track up the middle of the property, we understand that a compromise seems to have been reached. Public use of the existing farm track would be seen by the holders as intrusive, while the 150 m width of the proposed easement will allow formation of a graded track within that strip. This is a compromise which is acceptable to FMC.

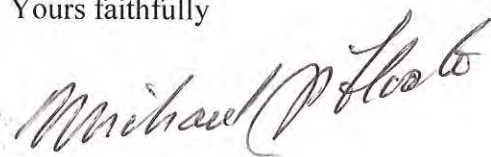
**FMC Submission**

*FMC accepts the proposal for a 150 m wide corridor to be established as an easement for public foot, horse and mountain bike use up the northeastern (NE) boundary of the property. FMC submits that provision must be made before tenure review is completed, for public access from the Mt Barker Road to the bottom of the proposed easement, at point (d) and thence up the NE boundary of the property. An alternative to the proposed section marked (b-d) must be provided as this section is impracticable for public foot, mountain bike or horse use.*

FMC submits that all our concerns expressed in the above submissions are important and must be resolved before this review is finalized. If they cannot be resolved then an alternative is that the review could be aborted, and the tenure of the property could revert to that of pastoral lease.

Finally, FMC thanks the Crown Agent, Opus International Consulting Ltd, for consultation regarding the period of time allowed for submissions (taking into account winter weather conditions). We also thank the runholder, Jamie Robertson for permission to inspect the property and for valuable discussions, and the Commissioner of Crown Lands for the opportunity to comment on the Preliminary Proposal for the tenure review of The Larches pastoral lease.

Yours faithfully



bp Phil Glasson  
Secretary, Federated Mountain Clubs of NZ, Inc.

APPENDIX FMC 2001 Report on the Larches

RECREATIONAL AND RELATED SIGNIFICANT INHERENT  
VALUES ON THE LARCHES

A Preliminary Report to FMC based on field inspection  
and other research to assist in the Tenure Review Process

December 2001

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Fig.1. The Larches property consists of two distinctly different land forms. In this view can be seen the western scarp faces which form the true right of the Cardrona Valley. The view here is from near the Little Criffel Trig at 1,341m at the top of the scarp slope. The road in the valley is an increasingly popular tourist route, both in summer and winter, between Queenstown and Wanaka.

Fig. 2. The other distinctive landform on the Larches is the rolling plateau which lies between about 1,300 and 1,400m. The plateau rises gently towards the summit of the Pisa Range and includes the headwaters of the Luggate Creek catchment. This view is from near Little Criffel looking towards the Pisa tops.

Fig.3. The Larches homestead is situated on a low terrace beside the Cardrona River (extreme left in this view) just where the Cardrona Valley opens out into the Upper Clutha basin. The lower slopes are mainly improved pasture but there are some important areas of shrubland which add significantly to the biodiversity of the property. Lake Wanaka and the township can be seen in the distance.

Fig. 4. The homestead lies just across the Cardrona River from the Cardrona Valley Road which can be seen in this view. The lower to mid-slopes above the homestead are LUC Class IV and VI land which, with appropriate maintenance, should be capable of supporting sustainable pastoral use and therefore be suitable for freeholding up to about 1,000m, or about 3/4 of the way up the skyline slope in this view.

Fig. 5. The upper slopes and rolling plateau are LUC Class VII and by definition have a low suitability for sustainable pastoral use. They are heavily infested with tussock hawkweed (*Hieracium lepidulum*) but also contain important wetland communities which are rich in biodiversity.

Fig. 6. The upper slopes, skyline scarp and rolling plateau have significant inherent values which enhance their value for recreation and conservation. The upper slopes between about 1,000 and 1,100m carry short tussock grassland among a steep landscape dotted with schist tors and bluffs.

Fig. 7. Near the eastern boundary of the plateau block of The Larches, Luggate Creek is deeply incised and is bounded by steep rocky valley sides which contrast with the gently rolling surface of the plateau, and add greatly to its landscape appeal.

Fig. 8. Above the Criffel Diggings, Luggate Creek flows over more gentle gradients and its many tributary branches and localised wetlands are the gathering grounds for the network of races which lead to the diggings. This complex network of races is of considerable historical significance and offers a multitude of opportunities for exploration by those who have an interest in goldmining relics.

Fig. 9. A group of walkers on the Otago Goldfields Heritage Trust Cavalcade is approaching the historic Criffel Diggings. The Diggings are situated near the northern boundary of the plateau block. In the distance, across the Cardrona Valley, can be seen the snow on the Cardrona Skifield.

Fig. 10. The farm track on The Larches would be preferable to the steep access over Avalon to the skyline ridge of the Criffel Range. Such alternative access would also create opportunities for round trips, which would be rewarded by superb views over the Upper Clutha and Lakes Wanaka and Hawea. This 1999 photo shows tussocks below the snowline fence which were more numerous then.

Fig. 11. The natural values of the plateau block include birds as well as the botanical biodiversity. Bird life includes Oyster Catchers and this New Zealand Falcon which seems to be resident at the Little Criffel Trig as it has been seen on the same perch on several occasions.

Fig. 12. Shrublands on the lower slopes are not extensive but do contain some important examples of 'old man' kanuka as well as species of *Olearia* and *Coprosma* with manuka and matagouri. The best areas of shrubland are important as examples of biodiversity and should be retained as Conservation Reserve or protected under Conservation Covenant. A few wilding pines could pose problems and the tenure review agreement should include a commitment to eradicate them.



## INTRODUCTION

This Report has been prepared following the Early Warning Meeting in October 2001 at which the properties entering the tenure review process in 2001 were introduced. Federated Mountain Clubs of NZ (FMC) were unable to attend that meeting so this report is offered as a contribution to the statutory consultation process undertaken by the Department of Conservation.

The Report focuses on those features of the property which are known to be important for public recreational interests. It should be noted that while much of this interest focuses on access, the natural and historical values and landscapes of the areas concerned have a fundamental impact on the recreational value of the property and greatly influence the quality of recreational experience enjoyed. It is for this reason that reference is also made to the natural, historical and landscape values in this Report.

Mason (1988) has described the general area as follows:- *"The Pisa Range is the most western of Central Otago's block mountains. It is a distinct geographic unit separated from other high country by major river valleys and basins. The Clutha Valley is to north and east, and the Cardrona Valley and Kawarau Gorge provide western and southern boundaries respectively. Unlike most other Otago block mountains the Pisa presents distinct fault escarpments on either side, with a nine kilometer wide, sloping summit plateau between. The western scarp. With its Criffel Range northern extension, rises 900 to 1000m above the Cardrona Valley. Two catchments drain the plateau; Luggate Creek into the Clutha and the Roaring Meg into the Kawarau; both becoming deeply incised in their lower reaches but retaining shallow intricate sub-catchments in their headwaters. Overall the plateau landscape is characterised by gentle rounded forms. It lies between 1,700 and 1,964m."*

## METHODS OF SURVEY AND ASSESSMENT

A site visit and field inspection was carried out in December 2001. This report is based on the field inspection and in part, on information gathered from other sources. The other sources include studies of topographical and Land Use Capability (LUC) maps, consultation with recreational user groups and a knowledge of the landscapes seen from the Cardrona Valley Road. A study of "Outdoor Recreation in Otago" was undertaken by Mason (1988) and published by FMC. Reference is made to this Recreation Plan for Otago in the recreation section below. The Conservation Management Strategy for Otago has also been used as a source of reference.

## GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE LARCHES

The Larches is a relatively small pastoral lease (1,800 ha) consisting of two contrasting landforms: the western scarp slope of the Pisa Range (Fig. 1), and part of the rolling plateau between about 1,300 and 1,400m (Fig. 2). The homestead is situated at about 350m on a low alluvial river terrace within the narrow river valley floor, at the point where the valley opens out into the Upper Clutha basin (Fig. 3).

Now that the road has been sealed, the Cardrona Valley is a major tourist route between Wanaka and Queenstown. This carries both summer visitors and, in winter, skiers shuttling between ski fields in the Upper Clutha and Wakatipu basins. The homestead is however, concealed within the plantation of exotic conifers, including a few larches after which it is named (Fig. 4).

The Cardrona faces of The Larches are drained by several small creeks and streams, while the rolling plateau area forms part of the headwaters of Luggate Creek.

The lower slopes have been classified LUC Class IV and VI, the mid to upper slopes as Class VI and the highest slopes along the skyline are Class VIIe. The rolling plateau is all Class VII, due either to proneness to erosion, or climatic limitation.

It is likely that the lower and mid to upper slopes (LUC Class IV and VI land) are capable of supporting sustainable pastoral use with appropriate maintenance (Fig. 4). The highest slopes and the rolling plateau has by definition low suitability for pastoral use, and is heavily infested with tussock hawkweed (Fig. 5). As such it is not capable of supporting sustainable pastoral production.