



## **SUBMISSION TO WHAITUA COMMITTEE RE POTENTIAL WATER ALLOCATION CHANGES TO THE UPPER RUAMAHANGA AND WAIPOUA RIVERS**

Members of the Gladstone Sports & Social Complex and the Gladstone Rugby Football Club attended the meeting held at Makoura College on 8 February 2018.

### **Our Background**

The Gladstone Sports & Social Complex is owned and run by the Gladstone Community. It was opened in 1981 with local funding and is operated as an Incorporated Society run by an annually elected committee. For over 30 years we have provided recreational and social activities for the community at no cost to the ratepayers. The Gladstone Rugby Club which was formed in 1903 use this as their Clubrooms and are our major stakeholders. The Complex is used by members of the Premier, Senior Reserve and JAB rugby teams, women's hockey and netball, tennis, Pilates, badminton, horse sports and the Gladstone School for their sports practices on the turf during summer and winter. During the winter season we have up to 1,000 sports people using the facilities each week.

In order to cover the running costs for the Complex facilities the venue is hired out particularly in the summer months for weddings, family celebrations, and meetings and an annual Scout Camp is held on the field. We are a self-funding, not-for-profit organisation with donations from the community supplementing fundraising activities such as an Annual Quiz Night run by the committee to contribute towards continued maintenance, new amenities etc.

The Gladstone Sports & Social Complex is a long established and very important asset and focal point for the small rural community of Gladstone.

There are **Significant Issues** relating to potential water allocation changes that will affect our operations and financial stability such as:

- The main volume of water used is to irrigate the playing field and if our allocation is cut back we will be well short of water to irrigate in order to ensure a safe playing surface for both junior and senior rugby grades. This is a Health & Safety issue that is of grave concern to us.  
The irrigation generally only takes place during January and February and this is sufficient to address our requirements.
- The bore for which we have a Water Use consent also supplies the water to the complex building itself including the kitchen and bathroom facilities. If a cease take rule was enforced then we would be unable to utilise the facilities during summer months as there will be no guarantee of a water supply to the building and therefore this would become a hygiene issue.

The **Economic Impact** would be immediate:

- No water would potentially mean no rugby in the early part of the season, no social events using the Complex (weddings, meetings, celebrations) no other sports could be played (badminton, tennis, hockey or netball), no horse sports, and no school kids games either.
- The lack of use of the facility would lead to a reduction in income from Complex hire, which could potentially lead to the closure of the facility. We currently spend over \$30,000 per annum just to keep the doors open.
- We are a Civil Defence Emergency Centre for the Eastern side of the Ruamahanga River.
- The Gladstone Rugby Club have made a significant investment in irrigation to provide a safe playing surface and take great pride in the appearance of all the grounds spending time mowing and planting the riverside in native vegetation. The Complex committee and volunteers have also contributed to enhancing the surroundings.

We are a not-for-profit organisation made up of volunteers providing sporting and social amenities within the rural community and we are going to be penalised while the same organisations in the urban areas are not affected.

The sports fields in the urban areas will be able to carry on and water as per usual, as their water take is not threatened. This is not a fair playing field.

The Gladstone Complex and associated users provide a safe sporting and social amenity to be enjoyed by all in the community. We promote cultural and social

wellbeing – keeping kids off the streets, managing mental wellness and contributing to a vibrant community.

Mental health in farming communities is an acknowledged concern of government. NZ statistics indicate in the past 10 years on average 20 men die through suicide per annum. Further, that the highest suicide rate is between the ages of 25-49. This is the age of the majority of men in our community. Given this, community Sporting Complexes such as Gladstone's play an important role in social cohesion and interaction. They are key ways of ensuring our community's mental health and wellbeing is looked after.

**Issues to be Addressed by Whaitua Committee:**

- Peter Gawith's letter 30 January 2018 says:

*"We will take the following into consideration:*

- *Ecological health and cultural values*
- *Climate change impacts*
- ***Economic impact (loss of revenue)***
- ***Capital investment (infrastructure costs)***
- ***Equity with and the needs of other water users"***

**We request urgent action in providing a Social Impact Analysis, Economic Impact Analysis, Capital Investment Analysis and information on Equity with the needs of other water users.**

**We also ask that you take into consideration the mental wellbeing of families who have farmed and lived in this community for generations who may now suddenly be facing the prospect of operating in an uneconomic environment after making a huge financial investment in their business. These are the very people who have contributed to the growth of the District and indeed all of New Zealand's economic and social wellbeing.**

Yours sincerely

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