

**BEFORE PALMERSTON NORTH CITY COUNCIL**

**UNDER THE**

Resource Management Act 1991

**IN THE MATTER OF**

of application RC LU5959 by Soul Friend Pet Cremations (Applicant) to the Palmerston North City Council for resource consents to establish and operate a pet cremation business, public memorial garden, woodworking workshop and spray booth for urn finishes and to undertake land disturbance and a change in use of a piece of land described in the hazardous activities and industries list without a detailed site investigation at 94 Mulgrave Street, Ashhurst

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**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF STEFAN STEYN ON BEHALF OF Soul  
Friends Pet Cremations**

Landscape Architect

05 October 2021

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## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **Qualifications and experience**

- 1.1 My name is Stefan Steyn. I am a Senior Landscape Architect at WSP.
- 1.2 I have the following qualifications relevant to the evidence I shall give:
  - (a) I have a Bachelors degree in Landscape Architecture; and
  - (b) I am a registered member of the New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects
- 1.3 I have practiced as a Landscape Architect for 18 years. I have 14 and a half years' experience in New Zealand as a Landscape Architect. Prior to that I have had three and a half years' experience in the United Kingdom and one year in the Republic of South Africa.
- 1.4 I have a broad skills base with experience spanning across landscape planning, assessment, management and design for a diverse range of projects in both urban and rural contexts.
- 1.5 In New Zealand I have practised as a Landscape Architect in Hamilton and Napier, undertaking work for clients from Local and Regional Councils, Central Government agencies such as the Department of Internal Affairs, the Department of Conservation and the New Zealand Transport Agency, energy and infrastructure companies, educational institutions and private developers.

### **Involvement in project**

- 1.6 I was engaged by Soul Friends Pet Crematorium to provide expert evidence regarding the landscape and visual effects of the proposed pet crematorium. Prior to this I prepared the Landscape and Visual Effects report submitted with the consent application (18th December 2020, Appendix D of the consent application).
- 1.7 As part of the preparation of the Landscape and Visual effects report I undertook a site visit in October 2020. Digital photographs were taken during this site visit using a DSLR camera, and the photographs were used in the landscape and visual effects report.

### **Expert Witness Code of Conduct**

- 1.8 I have been provided with a copy of the Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses contained in the Environment Court's Practice Note dated 1 December 2014. I have read and agree to comply with that Code. This evidence is within my area of expertise, except where I state that I am relying upon the specified evidence of another person. I have not omitted to consider material facts known to me that might alter or detract from the opinions that I express.

### **Purpose and Scope of evidence**

- (a) Summarise the conclusions reached from my Landscape and Visual Effects report which forms part of the application;
- (b) Respond to matters raised in the Section 42A Report relevant to my areas of expertise. This includes a careful review of the Hudson Associates' peer review of the Landscape and Visual Effects report; and
- (c) Address matters raised in submissions which are relevant to my areas of expertise.

## **2 MATTERS RAISED IN SECTION 42A REPORT**

- 2.1 I concur with the requirement to produce a landscape planting plan as a condition of consent. I note that the landscape plan provided with the application goes some way towards meeting this condition already and concur that a plan to facilitate how this would be implemented is appropriate. Below I make some comments regarding proposed amendments to the landscape plan.

### **Landscape and Visual Assessment Report and Mulgrave Landscape Evidence (Hudson and Associates Landscape Architects)**

- 2.2 I have carefully considered the points made in the Landscape Assessment report, prepared by Hudson Associates, September 2021 (Peer Review Report) which is Attachment 2 to the Section 42A Report and the Mulgrave Landscape Evidence (Evidence) which is attached to the Section 42A Report. I concur with the comments in Sections 13 – 22 of the Evidence which concludes "*As a result of these measures, effects are assessed as no more than minor after implementation of the mitigation measures proposed.*"

- 2.3 I have noted that on Page 4 of my report and Section 9 of the Peer Review Report it was stated that the tops of the chimneys will be 10.5 m above the ground. However, the updated Soul Friends Management Plan states cremator stacks are 10.5 – 13m high. Consequently, I suggest in Section 13 below that the proposed tree species in the plant schedule be substituted with tree species that will grow to a height of 13 metres to mitigate the visual effects on the nearby viewpoints.
- 2.4 I have noted that on Page 16 to 17 of my report I have stated that “the short duration and relatively infrequent use of the smoke plume is not considered significant in terms of visual effects”. However, I have subsequently been provided with a copy of the Air Quality Report, prepared by Pattle Delamore Partners Ltd, May 2021. In Section 4.2 the report has highlighted that “*The cremators proposed to be installed at the site are fitted with high temperature secondary chambers, which are designed to ensure complete combustion of all material. Well operated and maintained secondary chambers eliminate visible smoke and any potential odorous compounds from the discharges.*” Section 4.4 also addresses aesthetic impact – “*Under nearly all operating conditions, the discharges from the cremator stacks are very similar in appearance and odour to that from commercial natural gas-fired boilers and hot water heaters with no visible smoke. A 'heat shimmer' from the top of the stack under some light wind conditions may be observed.*” Based on this report, my understanding is that smoke will not generally be visible. In addition, the low visibility and infrequent appearance of the heat shimmer from the top of the chimney will not have any adverse visual effects on surrounding viewpoints.

### **3 MATTERS RAISED BY SUBMITTERS**

- 3.1 The Submission from Ms Catherine Shannon states that the proposed screen planting will not be able to ‘hide’ the four chimneys. To respond to Ms Shannon’s concern, the proposed screen planting will grow to a height of approximately 6 metres to 8 metres at maturity. In time, the screen planting will reduce the visibility of the chimneys and thereby reduce their visual effect. At maturity, the top 2 metres of the chimneys will likely still be visible above the screen planting, however the visible parts of the chimneys will be of such a small scale that they will have only a Very Low adverse visual effect from Ms Shannons’ dwelling. The proposed tree species identified in the plant schedule could be substituted with trees that will grow to a height of 12 metres to 13 metres. These may include *Podocarpus species*, *Corynocarpus*

*laevigatus* (Karakā), *Knightia excelsa* (Rewarewa), and *Sophora microphylla* (Kowhai). It is anticipated that any adverse visual effects will diminish over time as the planting will take 3 to 5 years to establish and form a degree of screening with growth beyond year 5 to 8 mitigating any adverse visual effects of the Proposal to an acceptable level. In doing so, the chimneys would in effect be fully screened from surrounding viewpoints and there will be a positive benefit from a visual perspective due to the additional planting.

- 3.2 The Submission from Mr Hanno Pieterse states that the “*changes to the rural landscape have not been properly addressed.*” In my opinion the potential effect has been adequately assessed and appropriate mitigation measures are proposed. The crematorium will be screened from neighbouring properties by the proposed screen planting. The current surrounding rural character is strongly influenced by the vegetation patterns in the area. Proposed mitigation screen planting is also intended to create a physical and visual connection with these existing patterns and the existing rural character. The resultant vegetative framework will not only absorb the visual change but also be consistent with the wider characteristics and identity of the rural landscape. The relatively small loss of open paddock will in my opinion have no significant effect on the openness or amenity values of the wider rural landscape. Owners of the nearby properties will be aware of the presence of a new building and activity on the subject site but will not experience the actual building as a dominant feature due to the proposed mitigation planting. In addition, the proposed building would be no greater than that of a permitted structure such as a large farm shed. Where views of the new building are possible, in my view its appearance will closely mimic the sheds and other types of structures already present and anticipated in the surrounding area. The building, where visible, will be seen in the context of the existing rural and urban landscape and will in my opinion be visually consistent with that landscape.

#### **4 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 The intention of the proposal including its building design, layout and landscape planting is to provide for a development that is visually and physically cohesive with the existing rural and nearby urban land use patterns whilst ensuring a harmonious integration with the surrounding landscape character and the levels of visual amenity currently derived from it. The positioning of the proposed buildings with the proposed

mitigation measures will ensure that the future development of the crematorium will reduce any adverse landscape and visual effects to an acceptable level.

- 4.2 The relatively small building footprints will ensure a sense of rural spaciousness is retained and give the Proposal stronger visual integration into the rural landscape while being as unobtrusive as possible. The layout pattern and built massing is also consistent with the visual amenity of both the adjacent rural and urban landscape.
- 4.3 While the proposed buildings will have a **Moderate – Low** effect on a small number of viewers proximate to the Site, the Proposal is not considered to have any significant adverse visual effects on the viewing audience within the surrounding landscape and will not substantially alter the existing visual amenity or landscape character of the rural landscape.
- 4.4 In summary, the proposed facility is not considered to have any significant adverse landscape or visual effects on the rural characteristics within the Site and will not substantially alter the existing visual amenity or quality of the Site nor modify the varying characteristics in surrounding areas. Overall the landscape and visual effects of the proposal, with the proposed mitigation are assessed as **Very Low**.



**Stefan Steyn**  
**Senior Landscape Architect, WSP**  
**05 October 2021**