Before the Expert Panel appointed under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024

Under	the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (**Act**)
And	
In the Matter of	an application for approvals by Matakanui Gold Limited to establish, operate, rehabilitate and ultimately close an open pit and underground gold mining operation known as the Bendigo-Ophir Gold Project

Statement of Evidence of **Chantelle Dodge** on behalf of **Matakanui Gold Limited** in response to Section 53 Feedback

Mine Closure

Dated: 17 April 2026

Lane Neave
Level 1, 2 Memorial Street
PO Box 7348
Queenstown
Solicitors Acting: Joshua Leckie/Sarah Anderton/Mia Turner
Email: joshua.leckie@laneneave.co.nz/
sarah.anderton@laneneave.co.nz/mia.turner@laneneave.co.nz
Phone: 03 409 0321

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INTRODUCTION

1. My name is Chantelle Dodge.

2. I am a Mine Closure Professional with 17 years' experience in the mining industry. I have experience across the full spectrum of the life of mine cycle from approvals and studies in the planning stages, through to closure implementation post mining.

1. I am experienced across all major aspects of mine closure planning including technical studies, risk management, closure strategy development, stakeholder consultation, rehabilitation implementation, seed procurement and management and closure cost estimation.

2. I hold a Bachelor of Science in Sustainable Development. I am a member of the Closure Planning Practitioners Association Technical Committee and have been a mentor for the last 2 years in the Environmental Institute Australia and New Zealand (**EIANZ**)'s Mentor Program.

3. This statement is given as part of Matakanui Gold Limited's (**MGL**) response to comments on the BOGP made under Section 53 of the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (**the Act)**. This statement responds to specific comments that have application to mine closure planning raised by:

    (a) New Zealand Fish and Game Council.

    (b) Sustainable Tarras.

    (c) Environmental Defence Society Incorporated.

    (d) Business South Incorporated.

    (e) Santana Mine Supporters Group.

    (f) Minister for Environment.

4. My original findings are provided in full in the:

    (a) B.40 Mine Closure Management Mine Closure Plan (MCM 2025).

5. These responses should be read in conjunction with the above referenced Bendigo-Ophir Gold Project (**BOGP**) Mine Closure Plan and in conjunction with the full Substantive Application, in particular the proposed consent conditions outlined in *D.01 CODC Land Use Consent and Conditions* and *D.03 Schedule One – Central Otago District Council and Otago Regional Council Common Conditions* (specifically C47 – C50).

6. I have prepared this statement in the limited time available for MGL to respond to comments under the Act. If the Panel requires elaboration on any of the matters raised in this statement, I am available to provide further information on request.

7. Although this is not an Environment Court proceeding my confirmation of compliance with the Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses in the Environment Court Practice Note 2023 is included in Substantive Application Document A0.2B.

SPECIFIC RESPONSE TO COMMENTS

8. The below outlines specific responses to relevant comments as outlined in Item 3 above.

New Zealand Fish and Game Council

Comment 8: The applicant has not put forward appropriate controls for management of the long-term risk of Tailings Storage Facility (TSF) failure.

1. The final design for the Tailings Storage Facility (**TSF**) post operations is yet to be prepared, which is appropriate for this stage of planning. The Mine Closure Plan includes a commitment in the Future Work Focus Areas to complete a further body of technical studies for the TSF which will then inform the final closure design standard. These will be completed during the operational phase. I note further comment on post-closure aspects of the TSF have been addressed in the statement of evidence of Dr. Trevor Matushka (Engineering Geology Limited).

Comment 9: Completion criteria that enable mine closure and relinquishment of the applicant's responsibilities are entirely inadequate and vague.

2. Closure completion criteria set out in Table 7 of *B.40 Mine Closure Management Mine Closure Plan (MCM 2025)* are deliberately and necessarily considered preliminary at the project planning and approvals stage while baseline assessments and technical investigations are initiated and ongoing. These criteria continue to be refined during the planning and operational phases of mining, based on new technical information, changes to stakeholder expectations, evolving industry standards and changes in risk profiles. Ideally closure criteria are SMART, that is specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound. All criteria are expected to be refined in each successive Mine Closure Plan (**MCP**) update and the final criteria will be agreed with relevant Regulators and Stakeholders prior to the end of operations. The consent conditions propose that the MCP will be reviewed every three years to reflect updates in the site knowledge, changes in the site's risk profile, amendments to life-of-mine plan and ongoing stakeholder engagement outcomes.

With each successive update, the level of detail in the MCP is expected to increase and the completion criteria will be refined.

3. What is secured is that Condition C116 of *the D.03 – Schedule One – Common Conditions for CODC and ORC Consents* prescribes 11 closure outcomes that the MCP must achieve (including safety, heritage, infrastructure removal, contamination remediation, geotechnical stability, revegetation, water quality, pit lake development, workforce transition and relinquishment of tenure). The outcomes outlined in Condition C116 are capable of being enforced by CODC and ORC. Refer to the updated proposed condition sets provided as Part 4 to this response package for amendments proposed to Condition C116.

Comment 62: Post-active treatment, MGL proposes a further "many decades" of passive treatment but has not provided any information about what the PTS will entail. Once the PTS eventually ceases to provide treatment, there is no further capture or treatment; seepage passes directly through groundwater toward the Lindis, with travel times of 10–60 years from the ELF toe and a further 3–20 year flushing period once contamination inflow ceases. There is no modelling of what contaminant concentrations will look like at that point in the Lindis or downstream water bodies.

4. Based on the current life of mine plan, active closure of the site commences post-Year 11, with final rehabilitation of the mine domains and a transition from water storage and reuse to water treatment by an active water treatment plant.

5. It is expected that ongoing passive water treatment will also be required in the post-closure phase for the TSF, Shepherds Creek ELF, open pit(s) and underground seepage.

6. Passive treatment (and potential enhanced passive treatment) will utilise pit lakes and engineered wetlands to contain and remove contaminants. Further work is planned during operations to understand the spatial requirements, treatment efficiencies, and costs before the specifics of this system can be confirmed to ensure an appropriate basis of design.

Comment 63: The closure completion criteria may allow seepage capture and treatment to cease once groundwater limits are met, without requiring compliance with the more protective surface water limits — meaning untreated seepage could flow past the ELF toe and into the Ardgour Aquifer and Lindis River system.

7. At this stage the MCP has adopted the operational water quality limits for both surface and groundwater.

Comment 84: F&G consider closure conditions and the MCP are vague and leave important parameters to be developed later.

8. Closure completion criteria are necessarily preliminary at the project planning and approvals stage, as baseline studies and effects assessment were ongoing at the time of MCP development. The criteria will be progressively refined throughout the planning and operational phases of mining to reflect new technical information, evolving stakeholder expectations, changes in industry standards, and updated risk profiles. This iterative process will culminate in the development of detailed, measurable (SMART) criteria, with final completion criteria to be agreed prior to closure implementation.

Comment 86: The applicant's proposed closure conditions demonstrate that the applicant does not have a plan for the perpetual maintenance required to maintain a minimum 1.5 FoS. This issue is to be resolved later, sometime prior to the closure stage. Fish & Game considers that approach defers a critical safety issue to a post-consent decision by ORC when it certifies the MCP, which is unlawful.

9. MGL has acknowledged that long term retention of liability by MGL. The final closure design for this facility is pending an ongoing body of technical studies, as indicated in the MCP Future Work Focus Areas (Section 13), however the closure strategy is to rehabilitate the TSF in-situ and the associated completion criteria in relation to geotechnical stability is that '*The rehabilitation design for the Tailings Storage Facility is based on a suitable FoS*'. Following standard practice, the TSF is designed and constructed in accordance with the *NZ Dam Safety Guidelines 2024*, and it will be buttressed by the Shepherds Creek ELF on the downstream side.

Comment 90: The BOGP:

(a) Makes no provision for the ongoing costs of 5 yearly PIC reviews.

(b) Financial instruments for TSF do not remain in place at the end of the project; the long-term ownership and financing of maintenance costs, including post earthquake repairs necessary to restore the minimum acceptable FoS, is left unspecified.

(c) Planning and provision for closure is not meaningfully incorporated within the design from the start of the project.

10. In relation to point (c) in this comment, the preparation of a MCP, despite the absence of NZ guidance outlining the requirements of such a plan, is evidence of the intention to ensure closure is incorporated into planning considerations from the outset. MGL acknowledges that ongoing work is required to continue to refine the environmental knowledge base that informs appropriate closure strategies and is committed to undertaking this work and revising the MCP on a three-yearly basis. I refer to Mr Chrisp and Mr Lane in relation to the bonding arrangements that follow from the MCP preparation.

Comment 93: The draft MCP uses vague completion criteria that "are considered preliminary at this stage of development" and leave essential matters to be determined later.

11. Closure completion criteria are necessarily preliminary at the project planning and approvals stage, as baseline studies and effects assessments were ongoing at the time of MCP development. The criteria will be progressively refined throughout the planning and operational phases of mining to reflect new technical information, evolving stakeholder expectations, changes in industry standards, and updated risk profiles. This iterative process will culminate in the development of detailed, measurable (SMART) criteria, with final completion criteria to be agreed prior to closure implementation.

Sustainable Tarras

Comment 57: The risks of establishing the TSF where consequences of failure have been modelled as high are sufficient to outweigh any benefits. The TSF is the riskiest option available. Closure criteria are vague and long-term ownership and responsibility for risks and ongoing effects of the TSF, ELFs and other infrastructure including treatment of contaminants are unspecified.

12. Closure completion criteria are deliberately and necessarily considered preliminary at the project planning and approvals stage. These criteria continue to be refined during the planning and operational phases of mining, based on new technical

information, changes to stakeholder expectations, evolving industry standards and changes in risk profiles. Ideally closure criteria are SMART, that is specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound. While a range of the completion criteria apply to the TSF, in relation to TSF stability, stability criteria have been prepared to ensure that as a minimum the rehabilitation design achieves an appropriate factor of safety (Refer to 'Stability 2', as detailed in Section 8.3 of the *MCP – Technical Report B.40*). All criteria are expected to be refined in each successive MCP update. MGL will hold liability for management of all areas within the defined closure boundary until it is agreed with relevant Regulators and Stakeholders that closure criteria have been appropriately demonstrated to be achieved or are on track to being achieved.

Environmental Defence Society Incorporated

Comment 11: Seepage of mine impacted water with levels of contaminants exceeding proposed water quality compliance limits for receiving surface water and groundwater systems, enduring for over a century and resulting in a high potential for long-term contamination of shallow groundwater and surface water receiving environments.

13. While the specific contaminants of concern have not been indicated by this comment, compliance limits for surface water and groundwater have been proposed and will be incorporated into the *G.01 Water Management Plan* proposed as part of the Substantive Application. While these have been defined for the operational phase, they are assumed to apply to closure. These are detailed in Table 8 and Table 9 within the *MCP – Technical Report B.40*.

Business South Incorporated

Comment 21: Recommended conditions on post-closure monitoring, financial assurance and period environmental standards review.

14. It is inherent in the proposed conditions (for example C116 of the amended *D.03 – Schedule One – Common Conditions for CODC and ORC Consents* proved as Part 4 of this response package) that post-closure monitoring must continue until it is demonstrated that the closure outcomes have been achieved. Regulators could consider making this more explicit through the inclusion of specific conditions that require periodic review of management plans at prescribed intervals to account for new technical information and /or amendments to applicable environmental standards.

Santana Mine Supporters Group

Comment 6: Supporters also recognise the project involves identifiable adverse effects in relation to groundwater, waste rock, tailings management, rehabilitation and closure obligations and long-term environmental stewardship. These should be addressed through clear conditions, ongoing monitoring and enforceable obligations including financial assurance mechanisms.

15. In relation to rehabilitation and mine closure obligations, the MCP has been prepared to high standards, despite the fact that no specific NZ national or regional guidance on MCP requirements exists. MGL proposes to update this plan every three years, in addition to the proposed consent condition which require the submission of a revised MCP at least 12 months prior to cessation of operations (refer to Condition C115 of the revised condition set provided as Part 4 of this response package). This will ensure new information or changes in risk profile are appropriately managed throughout the life of the operation.

Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment

Comment 12: In their current form, many of the closure objectives and associated criteria in the MCP and proposed draft conditions do not meet the SMART standard. MCP objectives and associated criteria are too ambiguous.

16. MGL has prepared a MCP in good faith and it is a draft document, despite the absence of NZ guidance outlining MCP requirements, in their acknowledgment of the importance of planning for the end outcomes and managing closure risks as early as possible.

17. As the MCP indicates, the completion criteria have been developed based on current knowledge and it is acknowledged that these are considered preliminary at this stage of development, while baseline studies and effects assessments were still in process at the time of MCP development.

18. Completion criteria, like closure outcomes, will continue to be refined during the planning and operational phases of mining, based on new information, changes to stakeholder expectations, evolving industry standards and changes in risk profiles. Over time these criteria will continue to be refined and progress to detailed SMART criteria and final criteria will be agreed prior to closure implementation.

Comment 14: In relation to the need for closure objectives to be flexible, the closure outcomes themselves should not be subject to negotiation after approvals are granted.

19. The existing closure outcomes proposed are considered the fundamental to successful closure and would only be amended in agreement with stakeholders.

20. Closure outcomes are developed in direct correlation to the determined Post-Mining Land Use (**PMLU**) after mining ceases i.e. what must be achieved to enable the PMLU.

21. Should the PMLU be refined during the life of the project with additional or alternative PMLU's identified (which is considered unlikely at this stage), this may necessitate revision of the closure outcomes to align with a revised PMLU.

Comment 16: For the terms on which the rehabilitation bond is returned, much depends on how the objectives and outcomes of the MCP are defined. International jurisdictions have adopted the concept of performance assessment periods.

22. There are 5 phases of monitoring relevant to closure:

    (a) pre-operational monitoring (baseline);

    (b) operational;

    (c) pre-closure (same as operational but may be at additional locations or frequencies);

    (d) closure (during implementation); and

    (e) post closure.

23. The data obtained during all of these phases informs assessment of whether closure outcomes and criteria have been satisfactorily achieved. Post-closure monitoring (the ultimate performance assessment phase) will continue until there is a demonstration that closure criteria have been met and that the site is able to be relinquished or parameters being monitored reach a steady state. At this stage monitoring costs have been included for an 11-year period post closure implementation.

Comment 17: Ultimately, there is a question as to who assumes stewardship of the site following mine closure. The arrangements relating to post-closure stewardship are not something that should be left to sort out later. Rather,

conditions specifying who is responsible for post-closure monitoring and management of residual risk should be included in any approvals.

24. MGL (or whoever the consent holder is) will remain responsible for monitoring and maintenance of the site following mine closure, until it is demonstrated that closure outcomes have satisfactorily been achieved, and it is agreed that tenements can be relinquished (in relation to mining matters).

Minister for the Environment

Comment 8: The application does not address significant risks from natural hazards other than seismic hazards (e.g. land instability), or the effects of climate change. As a result, the Panel has limited visibility of how non-seismic natural hazards and climate change could affect environmental outcomes and public safety, including tailings storage facility performance under extreme weather and long-term post closure risks. This constrains a forward-looking, risk-based approach to managing natural hazards, particularly given the long consent term sought and the permanent nature of many project components.

25. The MCP recognises that climate change can pose significant challenges for closure outcomes, and an understanding of potential changes in climatic patterns is required such that rehabilitation strategies can be adapted where required. The Mine Closure Plan Future Work outlines that MGL will develop 'an understanding of climate modelling, vegetation resilience, and extreme weather impacts to ensure closure rehabilitation techniques are appropriate and that outcomes are expected to remain effective under future climatic conditions'.

Chantelle Dodge

17 April 2026