

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

FTAA-2604-1207

Under	the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024
In the matter	of the substantive application for the Southern Link Inland Port
By	Southern Link Property Limited

**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE BY ANDREW GRIERSON ON BEHALF OF SOUTHERN
LINK PROPERTY LIMITED**

19 August 2026

**SIMPSON
GRIERSON**

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 My full name is Andrew Robert Grierson. I reside in Auckland. I am a registered veterinarian with over 45 years' practice, primarily in equine stud medicine. I am the managing director of Auckland Veterinary Centre 1990 Ltd and Woodlands Stud New Zealand Ltd. I have been a veterinarian and co-owner of Woodlands Stud for 32 years. Prior to that, I worked as a referral veterinarian in Kildare, Ireland. Thoroughbred stud farms in Ireland for which I have been the veterinarian include the Aga Khan's private stud Sheshoon, Walter Hefner's Moyglare Stud, and Roderic More O'Ferrall's Kildangan Stud. In Auckland, I have been the veterinarian servicing several studs over the years, including Woodlands Stud, Haunui Farm and Ra Ora Stud.

1.2 I have been asked by Southern Link Property Limited (**SLPL**) to respond to White Robe Lodge (176 Milners Road), which provided a written comment on the Southern Link Inland Port (**SLIP**) application under s 53 of the FTAA. My evidence is limited to matters within my expertise as a veterinarian and stud manager, being the welfare of horses, particularly broodmares and foals. Where White Robe Lodge's comments raise technical matters such as noise levels, lighting design, dust or traffic, I comment only on the potential effects of those matters on horses. In doing so, I have read the statement of Marcus Coban attached to White Robe comment.

Code of Conduct

1.3 I have read the Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses as set out in the Environment Court Practice Note 2023. I agree to comply with it and confirm that the opinions expressed in this statement are within my area of expertise, except where I state that I am relying on another person's evidence. I have not omitted to consider material facts known to me that might alter or detract from the opinions expressed.

2. CONTEXT

- 2.1** While I have not visited the site, I am familiar with the White Robe Lodge business and have identified the breeding activities across the site. I have reviewed their comment which included photographs of their land. I understand that, closest to Dukes Road North, there are three 'foaling pens' used for mares close to foaling and that the foal birthing unit is further from the site, located 120m from the Dukes Road North north-east corner of Southern Link Inland Port.

3. ANIMAL WELFARE

- 3.1** White Robe Lodge says the SLIP "would introduce a level of industrial activity immediately adjacent to our breeding operation that is fundamentally different from the rural environment in which our horses have been successfully bred and raised for more than 70 years," and that "mares close to foaling, newborn foals and young horses are particularly vulnerable to stress and sudden disturbances."
- 3.2** I agree that broodmares close to foaling and newborn foals are a sensitive group. A calm, predictable environment matters for a mare's welfare and for how well she copes with the birth of her foal. This is well understood in the industry and reflected in the Animal Welfare Code, which White Robe Lodge has referred to in its comments.
- 3.3** However, in my experience, horses are generally very adaptable animals. They cope well with changes to their environment, including a reasonable level of ongoing noise or activity. Across the world, breeding facilities are continually being enveloped by urban and industrial development yet continue to operate successfully. This is not unusual. For example, my former partner, Dr Charles Roberts, ran the successful Thoroughbred Stud Meadowlands Stud, located close to Ardmore Airport, New Zealand's second-busiest airport, which sees over 100,000 take-offs and landings each year. The foaling paddock was near the main runway, and planes often

flew overhead at low altitude as they approached to land. To my knowledge, there was never an accident involving a horse caused by aircraft activity on that farm.

4. LIGHTING

4.1 White Robe Lodge says street lighting is proposed "approximately 50 metres from our property boundary" and that, even when directed downwards, "this does not remove the presence of artificial lighting or the significant change to the existing rural night-time environment." They also raise concerns about security lighting, operational lighting, vehicle headlights and illuminated machinery.

4.2 Thoroughbred mares are bred from 1 September until around Christmas. In the thoroughbred industry, pregnant mares are called wet mares, and non-pregnant mares are called dry mares. Foaling units, including White Robe Lodge's own foaling unit, typically require managed night-time lighting as standard practice, since most wet mares foal at night and staff need sufficient visibility to monitor mares and intervene safely if complications arise.

4.3 It is standard practice for mares close to parturition (delivery) to be observed in well-lit paddocks with floodlights similar to those on rugby training grounds. Dry mares often have artificial lights providing the optimal breeding conditions of 16 hours of light and 8 hours of darkness to mimic the summer months. Floodlights provide this light, and more recently, hoods with a single LED light set to shine into one eye from 5 pm until 11 pm each day are common practice. Literature refers to lighting of sufficient intensity that allows a newspaper to be read, as the level required to alter a dry mare's reproductive cycles. It would be most unusual for security lighting, operational lighting, vehicle headlights, and illuminated machinery to produce that level of light in paddocks with dry mares.

5. DUST AND AIR QUALITY

5.1 White Robe Lodge says dust from construction and ongoing operations “is of particular concern for newborn foals with developing respiratory systems, pregnant mares, other livestock and the people who work on the property every day.”

5.2 I agree that young foals can be more sensitive to dust and airborne irritants than mature horses, given their developing airways, and that good air quality is an important part of animal health on any stud. Whether the SLIP will generate dust at a level that could affect the foaling unit, and what dust controls are appropriate, are matters for SLPL's technical evidence rather than my own expertise.

6. NOISE

6.1 White Robe Lodge's main concern is not general background noise but “sudden impact noises associated with container handling, the loading and unloading of containers, machinery operation, reversing alarms, the coupling and uncoupling of trailers, dropping containers, or other unexpected industrial sounds.”

6.2 I have read the statement of evidence from SLPL's acoustic expert, Brendan Shanks which sets out the technical details on the noise levels and noise mitigation in response to the comment from White Robe. He states that the anticipated noise levels from SLPL's operations are within the range of the existing noise environment emissions. My experience of horses' responses to noise is that they cope well with changes to their environment, including a reasonable level of ongoing noise – they are adaptable animals.

7. HEALTH AND SAFETY

7.1 White Robe Lodge says that “Thoroughbred horses are herd animals. If one horse is startled and bolts, others commonly follow, potentially resulting in

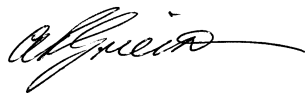
large-scale panic,” which they say presents “serious risks to horses, handlers, veterinarians and other staff, particularly during foaling, breeding and veterinary procedures.”

- 7.2** This is a correct general description of horse behaviour. Horses are prey animals, and a sudden fright to one horse in a group can cause others nearby to react as well, particularly if they cannot see or identify the source. This is a real risk with any group of horses kept near an unfamiliar or changing environment, not something specific to White Robe Lodge or the impact of the SLIP project.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1** Overall, my opinion is that the concerns White Robe Lodge has raised about the welfare of broodmares and foals are genuine comments about thoroughbred horses, but that they do not, from a horse welfare perspective, mean the SLIP and White Robe Lodge cannot operate alongside each other.

Dated: 19th August 2026



Andrew Robert Grierson