

7th April 2019

To whom it may concern,

My name is Blair Farmer. For 17 years I have been involved in Haast community affairs as a businessman, Haast promotions group committee, civil defence, land SAR and an St Johns 1st responder for 11 years of those 17. Including myself, we have a skeleton team of five 1st responders. Because all of our volunteer crew are fully committed to occupations involving 80 + hour weeks, we cannot formulate any roster system, therefore all of us are on call if available 24/7/365. We respond to callouts relating to 1200 guests per night. Average call out crew commitment time is a minimum of 3.5 hours, many requiring 8 hours time away from work and home.

John Cowan, a local farmer and businessman employs 3 staff, not including huge peripheral downstream employment. All three are emergency first responders wearing multiple hats of St John, Fire Chief, SAR, Road slip clearance and civil defense. Many times, John is paying wages of 3 men who are not there. He benevolently pays the wages of these men for many hundreds of hours per year as they attend call outs and numerous training courses.

All three are the cement that holds this remote community together. Two of them are parents to a total of 4 children who attend or are about to attend our local school with a precarious role of only 9 pupils. Any jeopardy of John Cowan's farming operation jeopardizes the viability of the entire community.

You need to understand the fact that sadly, this Haast community demographic, has a disproportionately high percentage of lower socio-economic residents whose compromised status for many reasons, discounts their ability to be active in leadership or supporting roles in the community affairs or emergency response.

In South Westland, there exists a fragile balance between community existence/resilience and externally driven environmental demands.

I thank you in anticipation of your sincere consideration to the matters outlined above.

Kind regards,
Blair Farmer

Ph: (03) 750 0868