RIGHT OF REPLY

May it please the Commissioner

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The application herein seeks consents to the subdivision of land at 117 Arthurstown Road, Hokitika into 15 allotments (2 to be amalgamated) and generic consent to erect 12 dwellings on Lots 1-12 and form an unformed road for legal access as part of a 3-stage subdivision.
- 1.2 The application was heard at Hokitika on Tuesday, 23 April 2024 and adjourned part-heard to enable further information to be provided from Council's Reporting Officer, the Applicant's Planner Mr Barry MacDonell, and Mr Stuart Challenger (Applicant's engineering witness).

2.0 STRUCTURE OF REPLY

- 2.1 Status of Activity
- 2.2 Reply to Submitters
- 2.3 Reply to Reporting Officer's Report and Section 42A Addendum #1
- 2.4 Reply to Additional reports (MacDonell and Johnson)
- 2.5 Response to questions by the Commissioner advised in Minute No. 4.
- 2.6 Response to other questions put to the Applicant during the reconvened hearing. (as identified from the transcript)

2.1 Status of Activity

The Reporting Officer in her first addendum Section 42A Report advised that the application overall was non-complying under the Operative Plan and permitted (in terms of riparian fencing) under the Proposed Plan. The Applicant expressed in opening that the application fell for consideration as a discretionary activity under Rule 7.3.3 (table 7.1). The Reporting Officer, verbally at the initial hearing, confirmed that the application was not non-complying, but discretionary.

2.2 Reply to Submitters

(A) Mr Nigel Gallop

2.2.1 Mr Gallop advised that water flows from the site to Arthurstown Road, and expressed his concern that if houses were placed on the application site, water would run into the road drain, that the drain might overflow and "make it worse". Mr Gallop expressed the view that the ditch would need to be retained, so that waterflows would not impede, and he felt that an elevated house site would "dam off" the whole area. He sought that 50 metres or so each side of Charcoal Creek ought not be raised. He also expressed the view that the use of soak pits could lead to water flowing onto the roadway, because the soak pits would be below the houses.

2.2.2 In reply for the Applicant: -

- (i) The areas to be "built up" are the house sites themselves, the areas will not exceed 300m², in total and their position will be identified on the land transfer subdivision plan as indeed they have been identified on the application plan. Not all of the site areas will be built up, merely that part upon which the houses will be built together with the access.
- (ii) Mr Gallop said that he "has been told the land flooded" and he said "I have seen it back up Charcoal Creek 4 years ago". Mr Gallop produced photographs, but there was no advice as to where they had been taken, who they were taken by, and when they were taken. To that extent, a reasonable part of his evidence was hearsay and should be ignored by the Commissioner. That said, rivers are generally active, and it will have been clear from the Commissioner's site visit that the Hokitika River is active towards the north i.e. moving the river towards Hokitika not away from it.
- (iii) Mr Gallop said that at some stage in the past there had been "a lot of water coming out of the ground" from "4 soak holes". No evidence of this (beyond Mr Gallop's comment) was provided. Mr Gallop said that his principal concern was "where is the water going to flow that is my principal concern".

This matter was addressed by Mr Challenger in his primary evidence. That evidence was not challenged by any expert witness for the submitter. That said, Mr Gallop has expressed his concerns, they are concerns which have been addressed by the Applicant (both in the Challenger Report and by the Hutchinson Report).

2.2.3 It is submitted that the matter of Charcoal Creek and its outlet have been addressed, and in particular no work will be done in Charcoal Creek. The Creek (shown as "is" in the plan annexed) itself will not be blocked or otherwise impeded, and it will be fenced off throughout its length down to the junction with the secondary channel of the Hokitika River, revegetated in native planting and revegetated.

(B) Anne Kieran

- 2.2.4 Ms Kieran provided a slide show of her view, her garden, her chicken coops, and her yard area. She sought that: -
 - there be no trees growing over East Road (legal road);
 - there be no light pollution;
 - the swale adjacent to the Kieran property be maintained;
 - that amenities (it is assumed electric power and computer media) be installed to the house sites before sale;
 - clarification of "what the bunds will be build of" and where the bund soil is to come from:
 - clarification of "the drain on Lot 4 and what happens if it blocks";
 - she was concerned that the driveway access "could displace water"; and
 - she sought clarification of whether the landholders, once subdivided, would be able to "change the land formation" of the sections.
- 2.2.5 As to "*light pollution*", outdoor lighting is required by condition to be faced downward, to avoid any adverse impact.
- 2.2.6 As Ms Kieran sought that stormwater not "extend beyond what is currently occurring" that is to say that stormwater should not exceed the current. The Commissioner asked whether she was seeking that there be "no change to the drainage". Ms Kieran confirmed that.

- 2.2.7 As to the other matters raised by Ms Kieran, the Applicant replies as follows:
 - there will be no trees proposed to grow "over East Road";
 - the swale adjoining the Kieran property will be maintained and operative;
 - power and telephone media will be installed as part of the subdivision to each Lot;
 - the bunds will be built of topsoil won from the site;
 - the drain on Lot 4 will be of such a direction as blocking is unlikely;
 - the driveway access will not "displace water" its design will ensure that water can pass; and
 - land holders could be precluded from post development land disturbance by a condition the subject of a consent notice if the Commissioner was so disposed.

2.3 Reply to the Reporting Officer Report and S42A Addendum #1

- 2.3.1 The Reporting Officer confirmed: -
 - (i) that the application is for consideration as discretionary activity; and
 - (ii) that it was a permitted activity to fence in the riparian area but considered that, in her opinion, there would be a "rural character change".

2.3.2 In reply for the Applicant: -

(i) There will be a "rural character change", in that there will be more houses on the site than under a controlled activity application, but considerable landscaping and planting (and the Applicant gave evidence as to his long history of restoration and planting – 8,500 plants so far), which will not only maintain rural character but, it is submitted, will enhance it.

The Reporting Officer said: -

"if you can engineer yourself out of an issue does not mean it is appropriate in the first place".

That is a rather unfair statement – not only does the plan recognise that lifestyle residential activity is appropriate in the zone and reflects that by allowing for one house per title as a controlled activity, but also "engineering" of developments is exactly how "issues" if they exist are

managed and dealt with. There is an obligation, if sustainable management is to be achieved, that resources be used efficiently and, in a way, where adverse effects (if there are any) variously avoided, remedied, or mitigated. What the application does is recognise that there will be effects, but avoids adverse effects in terms of rural character and to mitigate any that may be seen to exist, by a comprehensive planting programme. A condition can be imposed that once the planting is undertaken, it be thereafter maintained. That can be imposed by way of consent notice condition.

- (ii) The Reporting Officer said the "driveway will be lifted", "floor levels raised" and "pads lifted" and those activities are "not supported". There was no evidence given for Council from any person, qualified in the particular disciplines, either as to the matters of rural character, or as to the matters or effect of lifting of driveway access, floor levels and building sites. To the contrary, comprehensive evidence was provided through Mr Challenger and through the Elliot Sinclair and Hutchinson Reports which not only address those matters, but also indicate support for the proposal and those Reports remain unchallenged.
- (iii) The Reporting Officer in her initial S42A Report recommended that consent be declined on the basis of Section 106(1)(c) and Section 106(1)(d) RMA: -
 - (a) Section 106(1)(c) gives a consent authority discretion to refuse a subdivision consent in certain circumstances, including "if the there is significant risk of natural hazard". The words are very clear, there must be a significant risk of natural hazard not "a risk" of natural hazard. And it is not just any "significant risk", it is a significant risk that cannot be addressed by conditions. That is not the situation here. The Commissioner will recall the reference to Kotuku Parks Limited v Kapiti Coast District Council, a copy of which decision has been provided.
 - (b) The Reporting Officer then made the suggestion that "sufficient provision" had not been made for legal and physical access to each allotment to be created "... in the event of a major flooding event".

As said in opening the words "sufficient provision" where used in Section 106 qualifies the words "physical and legal access" and relates to the question of whether the land involved is "land locked" either legally or physically. Here sufficient both legal and physical access is provided, and the land is not "land locked".

As to access in "the event of a major flooding event" one would expect the landowner would either "stay put" whether at home or off site during such a flooding event, but is fair to expect that most members of the population would in such circumstances have plenty of notice of flooding and would then make their choice as to whether they stay put or leave.

2.4 Reply to Additional reports (MacDonell and Johnson)

- 2.4.1 The Commissioner sought further information from Ms Johnson and from Mr MacDonell, and through him Mr Challenger. The Challenger information was provided with the specialist expertise of Hutchinson Engineers.
- 2.4.2 Ms Johnson seems to miss the point that in the operative Westland District Plan Rural Zone, farm buildings are permitted with no limit on floor area, with an 8-metre-high maximum height, and a single dwelling per title is a controlled activity. Further, under the proposed Te Tai o Poutini / Rural Zone, farm buildings are permitted up to 10-metres in height, and one residential unit per 4 hectare site. In the adjoining settlement zone (Rural Residential precinct) to the immediate west of the application site, one residential unit per 4,000m² is a permitted activity and in the Māori Purpose Zone to the east of the site, one residential unit and one minor residential unit per 1,000m² is permitted activity. It is the immediate environment of the Application site.
- 2.4.3 Both Planners recognised that objective 1 of the MPS-IB and objective 2.1(1)(b) of the MPS-IB, and policies 8, 13, 14 and policy 6 is directly relevant to the Application. Mr MacDonell identified that Charcoal Creek re-vegetation is being "entirely consistent" with the policies of the MPS-IB, and although acknowledging the roosting trees are not natives, he draws focus on areas which "support highly mobile fauna" and highlights in his annexure 1 (the letter

from the Department of Conservation) which identifies the importance of particular roosting tree and supports the protection of them.

As to tsunami, Mr MacDonell identifies the relevant policies of the statutory documents, and notes the generality of them, recognising that the plans recognise that risk needs to be adequately mitigated. It is to be noted that the TPP requires avoiding locating "critical response facilities" to outside of the Coastal Tsunami Hazard Overlay, not all developments. The Westland District Plan requires development to be avoided "in areas of severe natural hazard" where risk cannot be adequately mitigated – again avoidance is only required where risk cannot be "adequately mitigated". The evidence supports the conclusion that such risk is more than adequately mitigated in the context of this application.

Here, not only: -

- (i) are all building sites located outside the Coastal Tsunami Hazard Overlay; but also
- (ii) flood hazard risk and tsunami risk have been specifically assessed by Challenger and Hutchinson, and their recommendations embodied in conditions.
- 2.4.5 Ms Johnson in responding to the Commissioner's further questions: -
 - (i) as to the MPS-IB assesses the application in terms of that document and concludes in her assessment that its Objective will be met, and of twelve policies concludes that eight "will be met" or "achieved" and three not. Of those three: -
 - (a) policy 6 relates to significant natural areas of which this is not;
 - (b) policy 7 refers to significant natural areas of which this is not; and
 - (c) policy 9 is not "confirmed" and it is submitted for the Applicant that

it is not relevant because of the volunteered protection covenant.

2.4.6 Overall, it seems that Ms Johnson agrees that the application complies with the preponderance of the MPS-IB and does not offend against the rest.

2.4.7 Ms Johnson concluded as to tsunami an acknowledgment that policy 25 of the NZCPS requires that local authorities consider the effects of tsunamis and how to avoid or mitigate them (emphasis added). She says: - "this policy does not refer to management of the risk present" but says that the risks are not to be managed "they are to be completely avoided or alternatively be determined to be able to be conclusively managed". The words "conclusively managed" do no appear in the policy. The words used are "mitigate them" which the Applicant has done, and the mitigation are embodied in conditions.

2.4.8 The Applicant replies: -

- (i) the Act, the primary hierarchical document requires "management" not of all risks, but of <u>significant</u> risks as does the NZCPS. The Applicant through design and conditions volunteered has managed risk variously by management and mitigation methods the Applicant has done both. The Reporting Officer seems to ignore the Applicant's active approach in this matter;
- (ii) in any event, the building site on each the allotments are outside of the Tsunami Overlay; and
- (iii) Mr Challenger responds: -

"I also note that the s42A report for the TTPP Hazards chapter is recommending the removal of the Tsunami overlay".

- 2.4.9 Ms Johnson also refers to the operative WCRPS 2020. That document refers to: -
 - (i) any subdivision in the coastal environment having "appropriate regard" to the level of coastal hazards and risks (section 9);
 - (ii) requires a risk management approach (section 9);
 - (iii) requires location or design of the subdivision so the need for hazard protection works is minimized (i.e. the word "avoided is not used") (section 11);
 - (iv) taking into account the effects of rising sea levels and potential for more variable and extreme weather events (section 11);

(v) the planner refers to the raised access and buildings sites as being "designed to modify" natural hazard processes – she goes on to refer to there being "designed to modify the extent of natural hazards on site".

With respect the planner has attempted to "read up" the policy beyond what it patently and obviously says. The planner says that each of the policies to which she has referred use the word "avoid" – but she ignores that it also uses the words "or mitigate" (see section 11 policy 2; section 11 policy 3).

2.4.10 It seems that the Reporting Officer has set her cap against the Application when she (incorrectly) terms it a non-complying activity which it was obviously not. Now, failing to find direct support for her position in the matters to which she has referred to the Commissioner, she randomly reads down policies (to avoid the words "or mitigate"), and reads up policies to make it appear that the policy say what they do not. That is not only an untenable and unacceptable approach, it is not an approach to be expected from a dispassionate professional.

2.4.11 Ms Johnson says that: -

"the PDP should be provided with more weight compared to the ODP due to the updated modelling and understanding of climate change and coastal processes".

Counsel commented on the matter of plan weighting in opening and will not repeat those matters here, other than to say that case law indicates that greater weight should <u>not</u> be given to the PDP as it has not passed far through the statutory process, and is subject to direct submission.

The Reporting Officer, when referring to the Operative District Plan indicates that although it was intended for rules to be implemented to avoid and mitigate the effects of natural hazards "this has not been translated into the rules" and natural hazards are not referred to at all within part 5.6.4 (being the explanation) and an explanation is not a rule. That is a correct position, but it does not lead to a weighting of the PDP any greater that the ODP. The PDP cannot be greater weighted until it has gone far further through the submission, hearing and decision process. It is still subject to major change.

2.5 Response to questions by the Commissioner advised in Minute No. 4

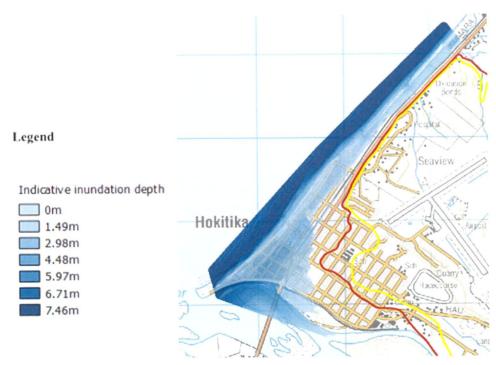
- 2.5.1 The hearing of the application was reconvened on 25 September 2025.
- 2.5.2 The Commissioner subsequently issued a further Minute dated 26 September 2024 seeking responses from the Applicant's witnesses. The questions posed were as follows:
 - (i) What is the likelihood of the Tsunami occurring?

Response:

This response is provided on the advice of Mr Stuart Challenger: -

On review of West Coast Lifelines Vulnerability and Interdependency Assessment Supplement 4: Tsunami, August 2017, Prepared on behalf of West Coast Civil Defence Emergency Management Group by: McCahon, I. Elms, D. and Dewhirst, R.

That study assessed that a 3m tsunami at Hokitika would have a 280 year return period and assessed that the 3m tsunami would be contained by storm ridges and current defences as such there would be no flooding. The 500 year return period wave height at Hokitika would be 3.6m, which would result in a 7.2m Tsunami at the shore (allows for a doubling of wave height due to run up effects). The effect in Hokitika is shown in the blue colouring in the following Figure:



Note that whilst the opposite side of the Hokitika River is not shown, by interpolation there will be minimal effect on the applicant's site in a 500 year return period event.

The red line in the above figure shows the edge of the orange evacuation zone (5m wave height) and the yellow line is the edge of the yellow evacuation zone (Maximum credible Tsunami). A 5m wave at Hokitika is assessed as being a 1,500 year return period, and the maximum probable event as being a 2,500 year return period.

The GNS Science Consultancy Report 2020/82 Tsunami Evacuation Zones for the West Coast Regional Council Gusman, Wang et al August 2020, was also reviewed. This report assesses several various earthquake scenarios and applies them at high tide at mean highwater springs to determine scenarios that develop the 3m and 5m tsunami wave height to develop the orange evacuation zones, it does not however, provide return period for the scenario, other than the maximum credible event, which it limits to the 2,500 return period event.

Note also that these areas have been developed to aid in tsunami response and recovery planning so as to define areas where people should be evacuated from and areas where people can evacuate to. It is important to recognise that the evacuation zones are not tsunami hazard zones, tsunami risk zones, or tsunami inundation zones. They are areas where it is recommend people evacuate from as a precaution after natural warnings, or in an official tsunami warning.

(ii) Your report mentions identifies flood debris from the 2018 flood. What return period was that flood?

Response:

This response is provided on the advice of Mr Stuart Challenger: -

Information has been extracted from the Land River Sea Consulting Hokitika River Hydraulic Modelling and Flood Hazard Mapping June 10, 2020 report:

"The flow recorder at the Hokitika Gorge recorded a peak flow of 2952 m3/s and was given an estimated return period flow of in the order of a 1 in 40 year event by WCRC hydrology staff at the time of the event".

(iii) Given the evidence that this inundation hazard is partly created by coastal hazards (i.e. storm surge, rising sea levels), do you think the site is defined as being part of the coastal environment as per Policy 1(2)(b) of the NZCPS?

Response:

This response is provided on the advice of Mr Barry MacDonell: -

It is Policy 1(2)(d) that is relevant since that Policy refers to areas at risk from coastal hazards as being part of the coastal environment, while Policy 1(2)(b) refers to islands. So yes, the site is probably part of the coastal environment based on this definition.

The coastal influence is however built into the flood hazard modelling which has been used by the applicant's engineers to arrive at the proposed building platform heights so they are above the 1 % flood event.

Policy NH P11 in the TTPP allows for development in the Coastal Alert Overlay provided there is appropriate mitigation.

Furthermore, in the explanation for Policy 4.14 (A) in the Operative Westland District Plan, it is noted that "Hokitika is prone to flooding, but it is considered that flood prevention measures are more practical than directing development elsewhere".

(iv) The RPS contains critera for SNA which seems likely to apply to the roosting habitat for the white heron and royal spoonbill, stating: -

"habitat of indigenous fauna that supports an indigenous species that is threatened, at risk, or uncommon, nationally or within the relevant ecological district."

If you agree, then do the SNA policies of the NPS-IB apply?

Response:

This response is provided on the advice of Mr Barry MacDonell: -

The definition of SNA in the NPS IB requires that the area (in this case the roosting trees) is identified in a policy statement or plan as an SNA. The roosting trees do not meet this definition. Nevertheless, as noted in our previous response to the Commissioner following the adjournment of the hearing, Policy 15 of the NPS IB appears to be relevant as it refers to areas outside SNA's that support highly mobile fauna, which would include the at-risk birds that roost in these trees. The intent of Policy 15 is to maintain the populations of the native fauna that rely on these areas.

Also relevant is Policy 6 of NPS IB which refers to significant habitats of indigenous fauna, with a view to protecting these habitats, ideally (though not necessarily) through the SNA process.

The proposal is clearly consistent with these 2 policies as the applicant is proposing to protect the roosting trees by covenant. This is fully supported by the Department of Conservation.

2.6 Response to other questions put to the Applicant during the reconvened hearing (as identified from the transcript)

2.6.1 Will the new Hokitika stop bank increase the flood hazard on the applicant's property?

Response:

This response is provided on the advice of Mr Stuart Challenger: -

The modelling report for the new Hokitika stop bank was prepared by Land River Sea Consulting Ltd. This report concludes that the stop bank will have minimal impact on flood extent and peak flood levels, except for some localised increases in flood level within the river channel itself.

This conclusion was included in Stuart Challenger's evidence, provided at the initial hearing (in person).

The Stop bank, subdivision and levels provided for Fishermans Creek (Golf Links Road site) are all in terms of the same datum; NZVD 2016. However, the water level slopes down to the sea, so any comparisons need to take the distance from the sea into account.

The stop bank will have a level of 5.5m from the Hokitika State Highway Bridge to about chainage 850 (just past Davie Street) from there, the stop bank rises to a level of 6.05 at the end of the works at the Dairy Factory, chainage 1195 (Livingstone Street). Jeremy's site is from about 500m upstream of the bridge to about 1200 m upstream of the bridge.

The Land River Sea Modelling shows that the flood level at the State Highway Bridge in the 100-yr flood event with RCP 8.5 and 1.4m sea level rise, will be about 4.5m. From this I estimate that a free board of 1m has been allowed, and that the water level will range from about 4.5m at the State Highway Bridge to about 5.1m at the Dairy Factory, or the end of Jeremy's property. As the building pads have been set with a minimum level of 5.5, and the floor levels will be 0.5m above this, they will be well above the modelled 100-yr flood event with RCP 8.5 and 1.4m sea level rise.

2.6.2 How does the flood risk for Arthurstown Road compare to other roads in the Hokitika area?

Response:

This response is provided on the advice of Barry MacDonell: -

As noted in Stuart Challenger's evidence for the initial hearing, in a 1 % (100 year) flood event, flood water depths along Arthurstown Road adjacent to the subject site will typically be less than 0.5 m. In contrast, in Hokitika, Fitzherbert Street (SH 6) will have a water depth of between 1 and 2 m. South of Weld Street the water depth will be greater than 2 m. Mr Challenger concluded that

access along this part of Arthurstown Road will be better than many other roads in Hokitika. It is noted that development is being allowed to continue in Hokitika, regardless of the flood risk (in respect of access) being greater than the applicant's site.

2.6.3 Why has the applicant not used the RCP 8 scenario with a projected sea level rise of 1.6 m, rather than the 1 m of sea level rise used by the applicant?

Response:

This response is provided on the advice of Barry MacDonell and Mr Stuart Challenger: -

The modelling for the new Hokitika stop bank uses a projected 1m sea level rise, an assumption that was considered acceptable by the Councils.

Furthermore, the 2022 Beca report on the new Hokitika seawall also assumed a 1m sea level rise, which again was considered acceptable by both Councils. Thus, the appropriate scenario was 1m, not 1.6m.

2.6.4 <u>Is there any early warning systems in the event of flooding and how much warning is there likely to be?</u>

Response:

This response is provided on the advice of Barry MacDonell and Mr Stuart Challenger: -

The West Coast Regional Council have monitoring on the Hokitika River, with a 2-stage alarm, which notifies Civil Defence at the first alarm and then evacuations are considered at the second stage. The gauge is at the Hokitika Gorge, and it takes about 4 hours for the peak to go from the Hokitika Gorge to the Kaniere Bridge, so there will be at least 4 hours warning provided.

3.0 CONDITIONS

3.1 Annexed to the further statement of Mr MacDonell was a full set of conditions which have hopefully collected up all the matters raised by the Commissioner or through

witnesses in the course of the hearing. The Applicant's building sites are above the 100-year flood event.

4.0 PART 2, RMA

4.1 The Application before the Commissioner falls for consideration as a discretionary activity, the planners both agreed in that regard. The evidence for the Applicant has covered all of the issues necessary for the consideration by the Commissioner, and a grant of consent subject to the application of conditions.

The sole purpose of the RMA is to promote the sustainable management of natural and physical resources and the extended definition of the words "sustainable management" is set out in section 5(2).

Section 5(2)(a) requires the sustaining of the potential of natural and physical resources to meet the reasonably foreseeable needs of future generations, section 5(2)(b) safeguarding the life-supporting capacity of air, water, soil and ecosystems, and section 5(2)(c) to avoid, remedy or mitigate any adverse effects of activities on the environment. The proposal modified by conditions achieves the sustainable management required constituting the sole purpose of the Act.

- 4.2 Section 6 of the Act requires certain matters deemed of national importance, and included amongst those is the protection of areas of significant indigenous vegetation and significant habitats of indigenous fauna, and "the management of significant risks from natural hazards". The Application provides for the indigenous fauna (albeit perhaps not significant indigenous vegetation) and that position is supported by the Department of Conservation (see appendix 1 to the further report of Mr MacDonell). As to the risks from natural hazards, it is submitted that they are not "significant" and even if they were they are managed as the National Policy Statement and the Act require.
- 4.3 Section 7 of the Act sets out a series of other matters to which the Commissioner is to have particular regard. None of those matters are offended by a grant of consent.

5.0 CONCLUSION

5.1 It is submitted that the detailed nature of this Application and the evidence supporting it, the fact that it achieves sustainable management as required by the Act, and the considerable conditions volunteered by the Applicant leads to a situation that consent should be granted, subject only to a judicious application of conditions.

NA McFadden

21 October 2024

