



23 March 2010

The Chief Executive  
TVNZ  
PO Box 3819  
Auckland 1141

The National Organisation in New Zealand of:  
Aviation Education and Research Organisations  
Aircraft Repair and Maintenance Organisations  
Air Rescue/Air Ambulance Organisations  
Aviation Fuel and Oil Suppliers  
Flight Training Organisations  
Aviation Service Providers  
Air Charter Operators  
Helicopter Operators  
Agricultural Aviation  
Aircraft Constructors  
Aviation Suppliers  
Airport Operators  
Airline Operators  
Aviation Insurers

Dear Mr Ellis

## **Complaint in respect of TV One News, 6pm Broadcast, Sunday 7 March – footage on Mount Taranaki, 1080 pellet drop**

The Aviation Industry Association, as parent body of the New Zealand Helicopter Association, is making this complaint on behalf of the New Zealand helicopter industry.

We assert that the helicopter industry has suffered reputational damage as a consequence of your news media coverage of helicopter dropping of 1080 pellets which screened at 6pm on Sunday 7 March.

The Aviation Industry Association (AIA) is the umbrella trade organisation for members of the commercial aviation community in New Zealand. We have been in existence for some 60 years and during that time we have actively represented the interests of the aviation community.

The news footage which we take exception too was screened on the 6pm News on Television One on Sunday 7 March. It was subsequently followed by commentary in the print media the next day and by your news broadcast at 6pm the following night.

In particular we take exception to the following:

- An allegation that the helicopter operated outside the pre approved boundaries for the drop;
- An allegation that the helicopter sprayed 1080 poison into a nearby stream;
- An allegation that the 1080 poison was sprayed onto unsuspecting workers and a nearby household;
- Misrepresentation of the flight of the helicopter even though the reporter had received an electronic map to show that the helicopter operated to tracks within the boundary zone;

- Misuse of or use of an unusual camera angle in an attempt to prove the point that the helicopter flew outside the boundaries despite knowing that this was not the case;
- Portrayal that the workers and householder concerned were in some ways unsuspecting of the drop, whereas both groups knew some 48 hours prior that the drop was about to occur;
- Lack of balance – the operator and land owner were not interviewed to provide balance to the story.

In support of the above we present the following facts:

- The electronic flight records of the flight which shows the boundary and helicopter tracks – these were made available to the reporter prior to the story going to air. A copy of this information is attached for you to review;
- The reporter was informed that 1080 is not sprayed but in fact dropped in pelleted form. This pelleted composition is used specifically to prevent spray drift. The reporter was aware of this point prior to the story going to air. To refer to the term “spray” is sensationalising what some view emotively. The effect was to make the aerial work by helicopters and specifically the application of 1080 poison more emotive;
- The reporter was informed that no 1080 was dropped anywhere near the stream and the reporter was aware of that from the electronic flight records prior to the item going to air;
- The reporter was informed that the household and the “unsuspecting” workers were made aware 48 hours prior that the helicopter would be operating in the block. This action is taken by operators to ensure all affected parties are well informed and can make any arrangements they consider necessary to vacate the area or wear the appropriate protective clothing;
- The camera angle was deliberately misleading and the camera operator, in this instance the householder was aware of the optical illusion being created. This was a well informed household and not just any old household. The householder has subsequently removed their complaint to CAA of over flight of their property. This was on presentation of the electronic tapes. It is these very same tapes which were made available to the reporter prior to the matter going to air.

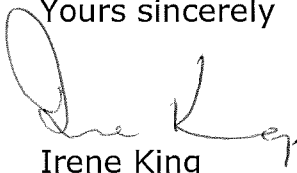
In the Association's view the following standards were breached:

- **Standard 4 – Controversial issues viewpoints** – the application of 1080 poison is controversial with very divergent views being expressed on frequent occasions. This Association, while not participating in the debate, is concerned that the precise and controlled manner in which the poison is applied is appropriately conveyed. On this occasion despite the reporter being very aware of the facts (we do not spray 1080 poison, we did not stray outside the designated block, and we did not spray into the nearby stream) individuals who watched the programme would have been left with the opinion that the application by the operator was "botched" when in fact it was not. This is evidenced by the electronic flight records.
- **Standard 5 – Accuracy** – the Association is of the view that the story was inaccurate and misleading for the following reasons:
  - Evidence was presented prior to the item going to air that the helicopter had not applied 1080 poison baits outside the approved boundary;
  - Evidence was presented prior to the item going to air that the helicopter did not "spray" poison but applied pelletized baits;
  - Evidence was presented prior to the item going to air that the two "unsuspecting workers" and the householder were informed 48 hour prior to the event that 1080 was about to be applied to the specific block;
  - Evidence was presented that the helicopter operator was experienced and held all of the ratings and accreditations to undertake the work and that the helicopter operator complied at all times with the authorisations he had been given. This evidence was ignored. The operator was made to look foolish and inept. This has resulted in reputational damage.
- **Standard 6 – Fairness** – the news item was unfair to the operator and biased in favour of those we do not support the application of 1080 poison. The two "unsuspecting" workers filmed were major advocates against the application of 1080 poison and favour the eradication of pests by hunting. The item had been "set up" by parties opposed to 1080 application. It is possible to set this situation up with ease as the helicopter operators will notify affected parties 48 hour prior to the application – this is industry best practice as we understand the sensitivity of the debate. However we do not condone this

practice in turn being used to further the aims and objectives of those who do not support the application of the poison.

The helicopter industry in this country has suffered reputational damage as a consequence of the article. The operator concerned has suffered reputational damage unfairly and unnecessarily. Accordingly we seek a full retraction of this media item and an award of costs for the time spend in constructing this letter and defending comment and commentary from other media sources triggered by the event.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Irene King', written in a cursive style.

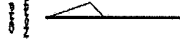
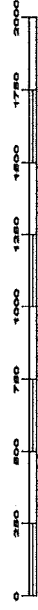
Irene King  
Chief Executive.

# JOB DETAILS

Job Number: 2591000  
 Product: 2591000  
 Aircraft Type: 2591000  
 Aircraft Rego: 2591000  
 Pilot: 2591000  
 Operator: 2591000  
 Line Spacing: 240.0 m  
 Line Direction: 150 - 330 deg

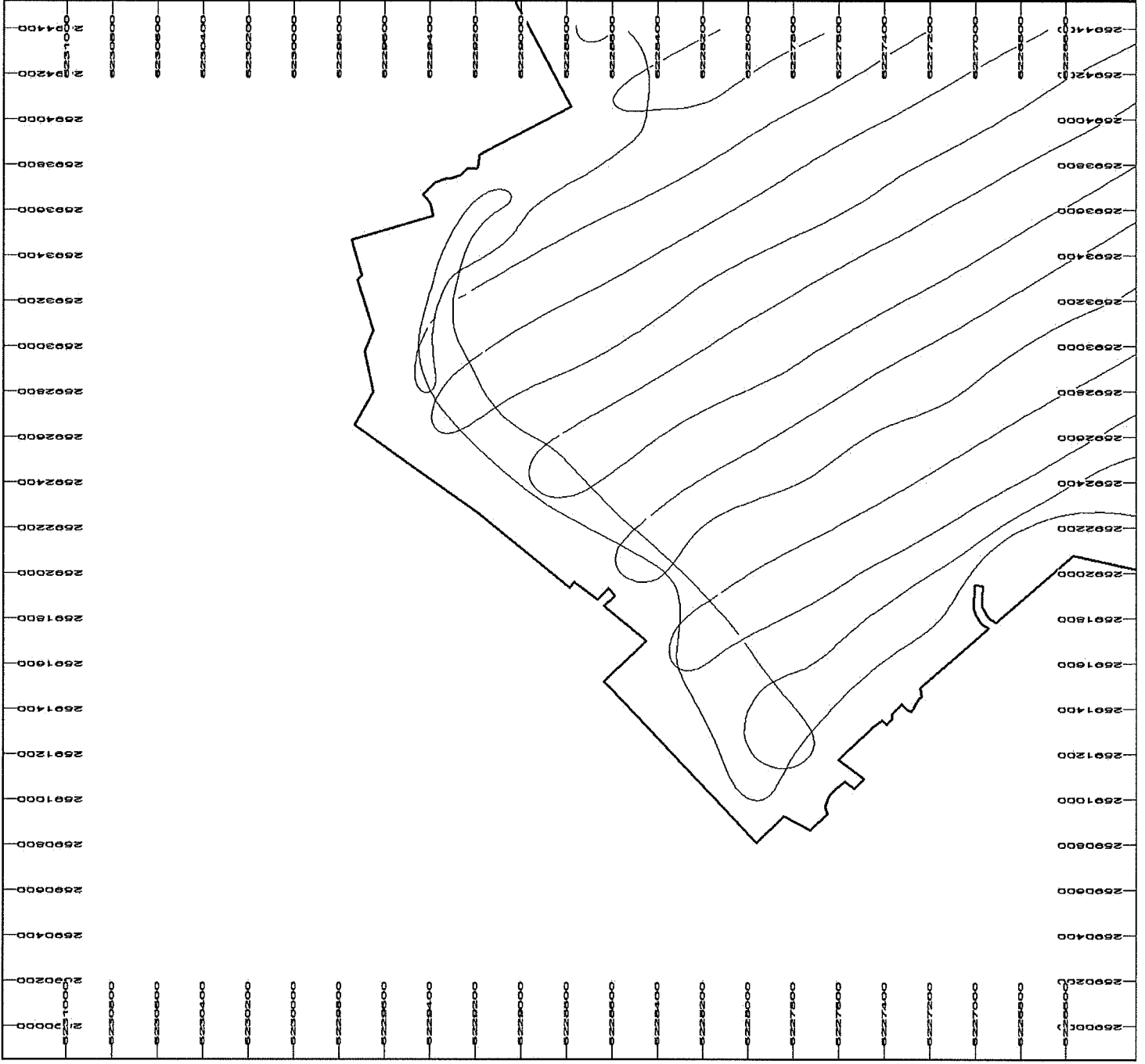
# MAP DETAILS

Projection: NZMG49  
 Sheet 1 of 1  
 Scale 1:25000



Drawn: //  
 Checked: //  
 Approved: //

Produced by Universal Training Systems Flight Block Planner V2.83



Flown by: Beck Helicopters Ltd  
 Job:  
 Flight Date: / /