

IN THE MATTER of the Resource Management Act 1991 (**RMA**)

AND

IN THE MATTER of resource consent applications by **Gisborne District Council – Community Lifelines** for construction and upgrading of approximately 4.2 kilometres of stopbanks, associated earthworks, road raising, drainage and stormwater infrastructure, works within and adjacent to the Waipaoa River, temporary water take and discharge activities during construction, vegetation clearance, temporary access works, service relocations, and landscape planting and site reinstatement.

SECTION 41 RMA - DIRECTION #4

INDEPENDENT HEARING PANEL

PURPOSE

1. The purpose of this Direction is to advise hearing participants of a potential conflict of interest matter that has arisen and to provide an opportunity for parties to comment before the hearing commences.

BACKGROUND

2. A late submission on behalf of the Kewa/Katipa/Cookson whānau opposing the application was accepted by the Panel. The submission was lodged by Maraea Cookson.
3. Upon receipt of the submission, Commissioner Josh Wharehinga immediately advised the Panel that Maraea Cookson is his mother. The matter was disclosed to the Panel at the earliest opportunity.
4. The relationship raises a potential conflict of interest and an issue concerning the appearance of bias. The Panel is mindful of its obligation to act fairly and to be seen to act fairly throughout the hearing and decision-making process.
5. My preliminary view is that the relationship has been appropriately disclosed and can be transparently managed through the hearing process. In forming that preliminary view, I note that:
 - Commissioner Wharehinga raised the matter promptly upon becoming aware of the submission;

- the relationship has now been disclosed to all hearing participants;
- Commissioner Wharehinga will not hear the presentation of the Kewa/Katipa/Cookson whānau submission and will not participate in any deliberations specifically concerning that submission; and
- it is appropriate that hearing participants have an opportunity to comment before the Panel confirms how the matter will be managed.

DIRECTIONS

6. Any hearing participant wishing to raise a concern, make submissions, or otherwise comment on this matter is invited to do so.
7. Any comments must be received by 9.00 am on Monday, 28 September 2026, preferably before if possible.
8. The Panel will consider any comments received and, if necessary, issue a further direction.
9. Any enquiries regarding this Direction or related matters should be directed to the Council at NotifiedRC@gdc.govt.nz.



Cam Twigley (Chair)
Independent Hearing Panel

Date: 25 September 2026