

Hon Tama Potaka

Minister of Conservation
Minister for Māori Crown Relations
Minister for Māori Development
Minister for Whānau Ora
Associate Minister of Housing



Ref: CORTP-6640 / CORM-1863

13 February 2026
Rt Hon Simon Upton
Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment
Rebecca.Thornley@pce.parliament.nz

Tēnā koe Rt Hon Commissioner,

Thank you for your email dated 13 January 2026 regarding the reclassification of Western South Island stewardship land, and my decision to not proceed with the proposed Whareatea Conservation Park for the Mount Rochfort Conservation Area.

I acknowledge your interest in this area, particularly given the ecological values identified on the Denniston Plateau in the Conservation Value Report prepared by the Department of Conservation (DOC) as part of the reclassification process.

After careful consideration, I decided to decline the proposed conservation park on the basis that the classification did not appropriately reflect the conservation values present. In reaching this decision, I considered all relevant material, including input from Treaty partners and matters raised in the DOC summary of submissions report. This land will remain managed and protected under the Conservation Act 1987.

The reclassification process in the Western South Island represents the largest reclassification undertaking since DOC's inception in 1987 and supports efficient and effective land management aligned with identified values. The Department of Conservation will be working to implement my recent decisions before any consideration of further reclassifications is undertaken.

Thank you for the offer to meet. Should there be time in my calendar my office will be in touch with you to arrange a further conversation.

I appreciate you taking the time to write and share your concerns.

Mauriora

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tama Potaka".

Hon Tama Potaka
Minister of Conservation