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From: Aotearoa Water Action Incorporated

Community group Aotearoa Water Action has won the first round of its legal battle against Environment Canterbury and two water mining companies to overturn consents to take 24 million litres of water per day from Christchurch's aquifers.

The High Court ruled yesterday that old industrial consents issued for a wool scour and freezing works could not be relied on to carry on water bottling.

AWA spokesperson Peter Richardson said that the group was delighted but not surprised at the Court's decision.

'We never believed you can simply take old industrial consents issued for a different purpose and convert them to water bottling, when the effects of the activity are so clearly different'.

The decision does not mean that the water bottling consents are cancelled, but it paves the way for a hearing on that issue in the new year.

Mr Richardson said that the decision should give encouragement to community groups throughout New Zealand who are battling to protect their community water security.

'This decision shows the need for wider community involvement in decision-making. That's why it's so important that the Commissioner who is now making a decision on whether to publicly notify Cloud Ocean's recent application to take water from the deep aquifer at Belfast allows the public to be involved in the hearing process.'

Commissioner Richard Fowler QC is expected to make a decision this week on whether to publicly notify Cloud Ocean's application. If the application is publicly notified, any person may object to it.