

7 December 2017



## Media Release

### **EDS calls for an independent inquiry into fisheries management**

In response to the release of the *Future Catch* report by the New Zealand Initiative earlier this week, EDS has called for a wide-ranging public inquiry into New Zealand's fisheries management system.

"There are many worrying problems with the current fisheries management regime, and these are far broader than recreational fishing," said EDS Policy Director Raewyn Peart.

"My research has shown that confidence in the fisheries management system is at an all-time low and there are serious questions about the capacity of the Ministry of Primary Industries to turn this situation around.

"We note the Government's stated intention to split up MPI. The options for rebuilding fisheries management capacity need careful consideration, including mechanisms to avoid agency capture and the potential establishment of an Oceans Agency to provide independent oversight. There are important questions about industry's relationship with the regulator that need proper investigation.

"Many inshore stocks are being inadequately researched and poorly managed. For example, more than 70% of the Hauraki Gulf's finfish harvest is from stocks of unknown status. Only 5% of the harvest is from stocks identified as likely or very likely to be above their target size.

"We need better funding models, and the application of more innovative tools and approaches, to significantly improve the management of these coastal fisheries.

"New Zealand is well behind other developed countries in addressing the environmental impacts of fishing. In particular, there is an urgent need to address the ongoing damage that fishing is causing to seafloor habitats. Such impacts are chronic, cumulative and difficult to reverse. They are impacting important juvenile habitats and helping to drive some of our coastal ecosystems towards dangerous tipping points.

"The aggregation of quota into few hands is restricting access to the industry, driving out independent fishers and creating perverse incentives. Our commercial fisheries are still largely based on bulk harvest methods, which deliver a low value product at often a high environmental cost. We need to incentivise fishing practices that deliver high quality fish, generating a high economic return for the country, while minimising the environmental impacts on our precious oceans.

“A public inquiry should be tasked with making recommendations on the changes required to ensure that our fisheries management system is up to international best practice, meets Māori and public expectations, and delivers the greatest overall benefits for the country.

“The effective management of New Zealand’s fisheries is a matter of considerable public importance. We need to get it right,” concluded Ms Peart.

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