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**Media Release**

**EDS critical of proposed changes to Resource Management Act**



The government's proposals for Resource Management Act reform, outlined in a discussion paper released this morning, would put too much power in the hands of Ministers at the expense of communities, says EDS.

"The changes proposed are deeply troubling and if implemented could lower environmental standards in our country," said EDS Chairman Gary Taylor.

"The paper proposes a radical shift of power to Ministers. The Environment Court's role in providing a check on the lawfulness and quality of plans will be greatly reduced. At the same time Ministers are given unprecedented powers to instruct councils on the content of their plans as well as powers to amend the plans directly.

"The proposed changes to the key sections 6 and 7 of the Act introduce new development objectives which are inappropriate in part of the Act dealing with environmental bottom-lines.

"The changes could encourage unsustainable and environmentally damaging urban sprawl. Developers will be thinking all their Christmases have come at once.

"More positively, the government has rejected its TAG's proposals to weaken protection of the coast, landscapes and native flora and fauna. However the inclusion of competing economic development matters may dilute that protection.

"The proposal to reduce the number of plans by blending regional and district plans could work but will depend on whether there are adequate protections to ensure the focus on regional natural resource management planning is retained.

"Other measures such as establishing a common template for council plans, common definitions, improving guidance to councils and time limits on processing resource consents are welcome.

"We agree that RMA processes can be improved but the discussion paper goes too far. Its underlying purpose seems to be to facilitate economic growth at the cost of the environment whilst taking power away from communities.

"It misses the key point: New Zealand's economy needs to be sustainable, it needs to work for New Zealanders, present and future, and it must safeguard and not harm our unique environment," Gary Taylor concluded.

*To see EDS's initial review of the RMA paper, visit the EDS website – [www.eds.org.nz](http://www.eds.org.nz)*