



31 July 2013

Media Release

Resource Management Reform Bill bad for trees

The Environmental Defence Society is urging regional and district councils to urgently consider the implications of the Resource Management Reform Bill on their indigenous biodiversity functions.

“The Ministry for the Environment has informed EDS that the proposed amendments to section 76 of the RMA are likely to pass through Parliament as reported back from the Select Committee,” said EDS Chairman Gary Taylor.

“If that happens, the amendments will negatively impact the ability of district councils to protect significant indigenous biodiversity and maintain indigenous biodiversity as they are required to do by sections 6 and 31 of the RMA.

“To protect urban trees, a district council will need to include a schedule in the district plan describing those trees and identifying the allotments on which they are located. This imposes a significant administrative burden on district councils.

“EDS petitioned strongly for the Bill to be amended to allow for the use of modern identification techniques (such as GIS). These techniques are much easier to use and provide greater detail than the antiquated and bureaucratic method of scheduling.

“District Councils have only 2 years to amend plans to comply with these new requirements. If this does not occur plan provisions protecting trees will be revoked.

“There is clear evidence that indigenous biodiversity continues to decline in both extent and health throughout New Zealand so these changes are most unwelcome.

“On a more positive note, we have been advised that the amendments will not limit the powers of regional councils to protect and maintain significant indigenous biodiversity. Regional councils (including the Auckland Council) should therefore continue to identify and protect significant ecological areas as required by sections 6 and 30 of the RMA,” Mr Taylor concluded.