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Media Release

Tweaks required to Environmental Reporting Bill

The Environmental Defence Society has released its submission on the proposed Environmental Reporting Bill. The purpose of the Bill is to require regular reports on the State of New Zealand's environment and to ensure that the reports are independent, fair and accurate.

"It is critical that we have good information on the state of the environment," said EDS Policy Director Raewyn Peart, "so that we are able to make informed decisions on how we manage our natural assets.

"EDS supports the creation of a national environmental reporting system which will ensure regular assessment of our air, freshwater, land and marine environments.

"It is critical that environmental reports are independent, fair and accurate so that they can be trusted by the public.

"The Bill proposes giving Ministers the power to determine which topics will be covered in environmental reports through passing regulations. This is of concern, as it could introduce bias into environmental reporting, through enabling Ministers to prevent information being reported on particular topics.

"Another key concern is a clause which would allow the information, which informs the environmental reports, to be withheld from the public. Transparency is critical if the public is to trust the accuracy of environmental reports.

"EDS's submission requests that the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment be given a greater role in the process to ensure the independence, fairness and accuracy of environmental reports. However, an increase in funding would be required so that an expanded role in environmental reporting did not detract from the Commissioner's existing work.

"EDS welcomes the introduction of this Bill and hopes to see the Select Committee make the required amendments to ensure that New Zealand puts in place a rigorous and independent environmental reporting system which is world leading," Ms Peart concluded.