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Media Release

Labour's Freshwater Policy Welcomed



Hon David Parker has tabled Labour's Freshwater Policy at the Environmental Defence Society's conference *Navigating our Future: addressing risk and building resilience*. The policy was released earlier by water spokesperson Meka Whaitiri.

"Labour's policy is comprehensive, well-researched and reflects a refreshingly deep understanding of the challenges we face in improving New Zealand's freshwater management system," said EDS Chairman Gary Taylor.

"The key elements are consistent with the Land and Water Forum's recommendations. That is especially welcome and indicates a growing consensus around that work.

"Labour has set what I see as an aspirational target of ensuring that all rivers and lakes are swimmable, fishable and suitable for food gathering. That is different to the National-led government's targets and will require a robust effort over a generation.

"Labour is also proposing putting a price on the commercial use of water. That will ensure that water goes to the best use and will further incentivise avoiding waste.

"The Party has also promised a new National Policy Statement on Freshwater Management based on an earlier version developed by Judge David Sheppard and a Board of Inquiry. That version has some merit. We are becoming increasingly aware of some flaws and ambiguities in the present NPS so this undertaking could be seen as an opportunity to "fix" those shortcomings.

"There are also changes proposed to the funding of new irrigation schemes. Labour proposes withdrawing taxpayer support for new schemes and will instead recycle the funds raised by the charge on freshwater into that support.

"Labour has also promised a National Policy Statement on Estuaries. This is a very good idea because estuaries are presently in a gap between the Freshwater and Coastal National Policy Statements.

"We are seeing differences between political parties about how fast we should improve water quality but there's general agreement we do need to act. All of the parties represented at the Conference's political forum (National, Labour, Maori Party, NZ First, Greens) agreed with that proposition." Mr Taylor concluded.