

11 September 2014

Media Release

EDS expresses real disappointment with Federated Farmers

The Election Manifesto released today by Federated Farmers contains an “extremely disappointing and self-serving policy wish-list,” says EDS.

“Federated Farmers has moved into an increasingly progressive space in recent years, characterised by a clear recognition of the need for farmer action to improve freshwater quality in rural areas and for hard limits on runoff,” says EDS Chairman Gary Taylor.

“It is therefore very disappointing to see the Federation advocating RMA reform to give farmers “full market compensation for landowners if land use is unduly restricted under the RMA” and arguing in favour of “industry leadership” as an alternative to regulation on freshwater quality.

“The Federation has also called for even more public subsidy for irrigation.

“On biodiversity, Federated Farmers says biodiversity protection should be limited to nationally important sites, for protection to be achieved through “non-regulatory regimes” and for property rights to be inserted as a matter to be “weighed” against biodiversity protection. This would be a massive backwards step for the environment at a time when our biodiversity continues to decline, both on land and in freshwater.

“Overall, the Manifesto seeks a future in which the Government supports further intensification of land use with public money, an absence of hard limits on nutrient run-off and biodiversity damage and, incredibly, compensation for meeting any environmental obligations that might remain.

“Any other development interest is obliged to meet environmental limits and internalise those costs into its operations. Federated Farmers appears to be seeking either a free ride from those obligations or payment for meeting them.

“A regime that avoids setting numerical limits for freshwater quality is contrary to what Federated Farmers agreed to at the Land and Water Forum. There was a clear consensus at the Forum that hard limits were required at a national level and that regional variations could occur provided those bottom lines were met.

It is galling, given that environmental groups involved have held to the consensus, to see Federated Farmers unilaterally going its own self-serving way. I thought there was trust there. This Manifesto opens up the real prospect of a return to the bad old days of active campaigning and extensive litigation,” Mr Taylor concluded.

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