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Media Statement

EDS welcomes Resource Management Reform proposals announced by Minister Parker

EDS is very supportive of the two-phase approach to resource management reform announced earlier today by the Minister for the Environment.

“The most important bit of this announcement is in the final paragraph of the Minister’s press release,” said EDS CEO Gary Taylor.

“That is the indication that the Government intends to undertake a wide-ranging review of the resource management system commencing in 2019.

“We have been waiting for this earlier signalled review to be formalised and now it has, people can really start thinking about what the next generation of resource management should look like.

“This is something EDS has been working on for the last 18 months in a project looking at first principles for such reform. We have produced three in-depth working papers and have engaged widely and deeply with stakeholders on the foundations for a revised system.

“Our work, which is supported by the NZ Law Foundation and business partners, is due to produce a final report next month which will outline three scenarios for reform.

“During 2019 we will work up the preferred scenario into a tangible and fully fleshed out proposal. This may be one of the three scenarios, a mix and match of them, or a complete reworking of the scenarios originally developed; time and the response to the final report will tell. This will then feed into the Government’s process in a constructive and timely way.

“It’s been very clear for some time that the resource management system is unwieldy and out of date. We have established that it is not delivering for the environment with environmental quality deteriorating across the marine, terrestrial, and fresh water domains. It is resulting in poor urban outcomes.

“The current system is no longer suitable for our rapidly changing world.

“The Cabinet decision also proposes to reverse a number of the negative amendments to RMA made by the National Government last year.

“Those changes saw, among other things, an inappropriate aggregation of power to the Minister and simultaneous reduction in public participation, and the erosion or compromise of environmental limits.

“What was notable about the 2017 RMA changes was the opposition across a wide range of sectors. It is clear many of the changes made were poorly thought through and as a result did more harm than good.

“Minister Parker is clearly committed to getting some early improvements with expanded powers for regional councils, the Environment Court, and the EPA; reduced Ministerial powers; and restored public participation.

“I expect that most commentary on today’s announcement will focus on the Bill that will be introduced early next year. That will signal a number of short-term fixes to the present system, most of which are welcome and have been suggested to the Government by EDS and its advisors.

“EDS will be carefully analysing the Bill when it is published early next year,” Mr Taylor concluded.