

Media Release

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EDS disappointed at TOKM's denial of problems in fisheries management

Te Ohu Kaimoana (TOKM) today released a media statement attacking the credibility of the recently released EDS book *Voices from the Sea: Managing New Zealand's Fisheries*.

"We are disappointed by the approach taken by TOKM, which is highly defensive and strongly protective of the status quo," said Environmental Defence Society Policy Director and book author Raewyn Peart.

"As an organisation which claims to work to advance Māori interests in the marine environment, I would have expected a more nuanced, constructive and progressive approach to environmental problems in our oceans.

"*Voices from the Sea* was based on 60 in-depth interviews with people closely involved with fisheries management. They included fishers from small to large companies, quota owners, processors, exporters, former fisheries managers, recreational fishers, scientists and environmentalists. Most of them had real issues with the fisheries management system.

"The book was widely peer-reviewed by many experts before publication and we have had overwhelmingly positive feedback on it. A copy of the draft was sent to TOKM in September last year for comment – but this personal attack is the first feedback we have received from them.

"TOKM questioned just two statements in our 160-page book which both refer to the impacts of the 1992 Māori Fisheries Settlement.

"The first relates to the greater difficulty it caused for fishers wanting to buy quota in order to enter the industry. It is self-evident that if you take out more than 30 per cent of quota from the market, access is more difficult and prices rise.

"The second statement relates to the settlement reducing flexibility to adjust the fisheries management system over time. This has been borne out by events, with no significant changes having been made to the fisheries management system since 2004. This is despite our understanding of marine science and the need for ecosystem-based management coming a long way since then.

"TOKM also points out the differences between *Voices from the Sea* and an earlier report published by The Nature Conservancy (TNC). Such differences should come as no surprise as the two studies drew on different data sources. The TNC report was largely based on official data and reports at a national level whereas *Voices from the Sea* was based on regional case studies and in-depth interviews.

“There is a wealth of knowledge and wisdom to be garnered if you talk to people on the water who have first-hand experience with the system. This is what we did. The book reflects what they told me and that shouldn’t be ignored or diminished.

“The TOKM statement also claims that the TNC report is not referred to in *Voices from the Sea*. This is not correct with several mentions contained in the footnotes.

“Frankly, anyone who thinks that fisheries management in New Zealand is in good shape is badly mistaken. TOKM’s stance reinforces the urgent need for an independent inquiry into our fisheries management system. Such an inquiry will enable us to find out who is right on these issues.

“Labour promised the electorate such a review and it now needs to do this,” concluded Ms Peart.

Copies of *Voices from the Sea* can be obtained from the Environmental Defence Society at <http://www.eds.org.nz/our-work/publications/>.