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Media Release: EDS welcomes Labour's new housing policy

The Environmental Defence Society has welcomed Labour's commitment to build 100,000 affordable houses over the next 10 years.

"Just looking from an Auckland perspective, it's been clear for some time that the market, left to its own devices, is not capable of building the numbers of houses required," said EDS Chairman Gary Taylor.

"Auckland is projected to grow by 1,000,000 people over the next 30 years. That will require the construction of 13,000 houses per year and at the moment the Auckland build is around 3,000.

"Clearly central and local government need to get involved and start building both greenfields and brownfield developments at scale. That should be done via a master-planning process that will enable the creation of more high amenity, environmentally sustainable housing like Hobsonville Point, but with a bigger affordable component.

"We need to get over ideological prejudices against state involvement in housing.

"Unless we can keep housing supply up with demand, house prices will continue to spiral out of many peoples reach and we'll create future social problems. Simply building enough houses is the first key challenge and Labour has recognised that.

"The other announcement today is that a Labour-led government would promulgate a National Policy Statement on affordable housing. It makes good sense to use the existing tools under the RMA in this way. We do not need radical changes to the Act that would undermine environmental standards to prioritise affordable housing.

"Many countries overseas use their planning and consenting powers to mandate or encourage an affordable proportion in many subdivisions. This is following the same path.

"Unless there's a fundamental rethink of our approach to housing, we will create an enormous backlog of pressure that will turn a big challenge into a full-blown crisis.

"Earlier this month National recognised some of the complexities of the challenge in its housing announcements – now Labour has committed to take the extra steps that are required," Mr Taylor concluded.