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Media Release

EDS calls for “open minds” as it releases its RMA submissions

The Environmental Defence Society has released its final submissions on the highly contentious Resource Management Act reforms after taking the unusual step of calling for public feedback on an earlier draft.

“We found that there was broad support for our draft from responders across a range of disciplines and are grateful for the feedback,” said EDS Chairman Gary Taylor.

“Our detailed analysis shows that New Zealanders are right to be very concerned about the proposed changes. The amendments to sections 6 and 7 of the RMA will have the effect of lowering environmental standards, contrary to repeated assurances by the Minister for the Environment.

“Our analysis also shows that the assumption of sweeping new intervention powers by the Minister are constitutionally offensive and will undermine local democracy. They seem particularly targeted at interfering with Auckland’s planning processes, something Aucklanders would resent.

“Other changes would dramatically reduce the role of the Environment Court and create a new bureaucratic logjam for councils.

“Collectively these changes go way beyond any reasonable improvements to the RMA and should be rejected by Government.

“We are also very concerned at the high degree of reliance Environment Minister Adams seems to place on the earlier recommendations of the Ministerial Technical Advisory Group. It gave misleading advice about the current law and reached some eccentric conclusions about what New Zealanders value. We think the Government should get independent legal advice on the effect of the proposed changes rather than relying on the politically appointed TAG. We also think Ministers should approach assessing the many submissions they will receive with open minds.

“Our criticisms should not overwhelm the many suggested changes in the report that have merit. They should be taken up and made into law and will greatly improve the RMA. But the environmentally and constitutionally obnoxious measures need to be culled out,” Mr Taylor concluded.

The EDS submission is available [here](#)

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