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**Media Release: EDS still concerned about Resource Management Act reforms**

“While a number of the recently announced reforms to the Resource Management Act have merit, EDS remains concerned that some of the proposals will have the effect of lowering environmental standards in New Zealand,” said EDS Policy Director Raewyn Peart.

The Minister for the Environment recently published a summary of the next set of Resource Management Act reforms after receiving feedback from 14,000 submitters. EDS has today released a paper analysing the proposed reforms together with a legal opinion on the impact of radical changes to Part 2 of the Act.

“The biggest concern is the retention of the proposal to significantly alter the principles of the Act. The Minister has stated a number of times that these changes will not lower environmental standards but she has refused to release her legal advice. EDS has now released legal advice, which confirms the validity of our concerns.

“Another key concern is the proposal to narrow the rights of submitters and further reduce the role of the Environment Court. The submissions and appeals processes contribute significantly to the quality of complex decision-making. Importantly, only a very small percentage of resource consents are notified or appealed.

“A surprising new proposal to reverse the presumption that resource consent is required for subdivisions raises a number of issues. It seems to imply that subdivision is permitted anywhere unless the Council plan says otherwise. This seems a bizarre proposition that needs rethinking.

“Opposition parties have indicated that a number of the proposals, if enacted, will be overturned when there is a change in government.

“EDS hopes that the Minister will consider further amendments to the proposals to ensure the bill will produce enduring improvements to the resource management system,” Ms Peart concluded.