

Media Release
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EDS concerned at covenant destruction

The Queen Elizabeth II National Trust has today announced that it will take legal action against a landowner responsible for destroying two QEII covenants.

“We are saddened to learn of the damage to the protected covenant land and support the QEII Trust in its legal action,” says EDS Chairman Gary Taylor.

The landowner has only recently purchased the property and was aware of the covenant before removing the fencing, more than two hectares of vegetation and undertaking earthworks to install pivot irrigation.

After a lengthy attempt at working with the landowner, the QEII Trust is now seeking both an injunction to stop further damage and the costs of restoration and enforcement in addition to exemplary damages through the High Court.

“The actions of the landowner in question are very disappointing, and the lack of cooperation displayed means that the QEII Trust has very little option but to take this action.

“The fragments contain some of the last skerricks of dryland ecosystem on the Canterbury Plains, with one recognised by the Waimakariri District Council as a significant site due to its high natural heritage values. The woodlots represent a National Priority 1 ecosystem, of which very little remains.

“QEII covenants are vital elements of conservation in New Zealand, with 4200 covenants protecting critical ecological areas on private land. It is disappointing when one landowner breaches its responsibilities. It undermines the efforts of other landowners who take the role of stewardship very seriously, and take good care of the habitats and species on their land.

“Farmers do not pay for the inputs into their land such as water, clean air and other ecosystem services. Biodiversity underpins many of those important processes and the removal of the habitat for irrigation purposes is effectively a double blow for the local environment.

“The public conservation estate, although extensive, does not represent the full range of ecosystems in New Zealand, and we rely on the efforts of private landowners to retain biodiversity in the fragile lowland and coastal areas, particularly where there is strong development pressure.

“For all these reasons, we support the Trust in this action,” Mr Taylor concluded.

EDS is presently undertaking a major review of biodiversity management in New Zealand, and the efforts of private landowners are emerging as a critical part of the task of protecting our natural heritage from degradation and loss.