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Media Release

EDS welcomes Labour's Environment Policy

The Environmental Defence Society has welcomed Labour's Environment Policy which recognises that New Zealand cannot have a healthy economy without a healthy environment.

"Labour has committed to developing and implementing a 'low carbon transition plan' to move New Zealand away from our heavy reliance on fossil fuels to a high-tech low-carbon economy. This is welcome news. We need to act now to ensure future generations can enjoy a sustainable future," said EDS Policy Director Raewyn Peart.

"Labour has again committed to retaining the purpose and principles of the Resource Management Act while pursuing sensible process improvements. We agree that there are a number of opportunities to reduce delays and costs, while retaining key environmental safeguards.

"Labour has also proposed a 'stocktake' to determine whether the RMA is achieving its purpose and principles after twenty years of ad hoc statutory amendments. EDS sees value in this proposition, provided the goal is ensuring the RMA remains world-leading legislation.

"Under Labour we would also see new national policy statements addressing the management of indigenous biodiversity, our estuaries and onshore oil and gas. The recent Supreme Court decision *EDS v King Salmon* has highlighted the important role that these documents play in establishing directive bottom lines that must be met nationally. EDS supports greater use of them.

"On oceans, Labour has committed to new marine protection legislation. Most, if not all political parties now agree this is urgently required so we hope to see marine protection legislation introduced and passed as a priority in the next Parliamentary term.

"We are also pleased to see Labour identify that new marine protection legislation is a precursor to comprehensive oceans reform. Our current ad hoc approach to oceans management is creating significant problems such as the current conflicts between the proposal to mine phosphate on the Chatham Rise, deep-sea fishing, and benthic protection areas.

"Under Labour we would also see environmental safeguards for offshore oil and gas beefed up. Labour would also ensure polluters are liable, not New Zealanders. This is a positive move.

"Labour has committed to ensuring the Environmental Protection Authority is a strong environmental regulator, including amending its statutory purpose to include protection of

the environment. Labour would require the EPA to audit the work of consent authorities in monitoring consent or plan condition compliance. EDS sees value in this proposition, which recognises that many of the failures of environmental regulation lie in implementation.

“EDS also welcomes Labour’s commitment to supporting environmental education and capacity-building. It is important that New Zealanders have the tools to enable their voices to be heard in environmental decision-making processes.

“The quality of our environment is important to New Zealanders and it is good to see Labour coming out with such progressive and nuanced policy commitments,” concluded Ms Peart.