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Media Release

Federated Farmers intemperate



For the second time in a week Federated Farmers has made intemperate and provocative comments on environmental issues, says EDS.

“The comments by its President Dr William Rolleston suggest that Federated Farmers new leadership has moved from a moderate and collaborative approach to a more extreme and narrowly self-serving one,” says EDS Chairman Gary Taylor.

“Last week the Federation released policy that called for hand-outs for farmers who are obliged to meet obligations to protect biodiversity under the RMA. Now they are talking about doubling agricultural expansion without explicitly acknowledging the need for limits to protect water quality.

“How the Government handles RMA reform will be the first real test of its commitment to moderation. It could respond in a gung-ho manner, as sought by Federated Farmers, or it could pause, think carefully, bring key sector groups with ideas into play and try to secure an intelligent, durable solution.

“There is a huge amount of scope to improve RMA processes which are unnecessarily bureaucratic and complex. Simpler plans, new templates and common definitions, greater clarity, more certainty and alternative collaborative processes for plan-making for freshwater are all in prospect.

“Problems arise around the proposed changes to the purpose and principles of the Act. The Supreme Court earlier this year ruled that the Act contains environmental bottom lines. This is new law and needs careful factoring into the reform thinking.

“Importantly, it also confirmed that National Policy Statements have real teeth and could be used to implement economic and infrastructure priorities of government.

“Prior to the election we tabled some suggested amendments to the Act with the Prime Minister. We think his objectives can be achieved without sacrificing environmental quality. We hope he will press the reset button on RMA reform and will engage in a sensible discussion with stakeholders instead of just ramming something damaging through, as Federated Farmers seems to prefer,” Mr Taylor concluded.

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