



## Protecting Canterbury's Most Important Resource: **WATER**

### A message from Rt Hon John Key MP

Dear Cantabrian,

I am writing to you about the changes the Government is making to improve water management in Canterbury, and to seek your views.

The National-led Government is committed to growing our economy, creating jobs, and raising living standards, while protecting our environment. Efficient water management is a big part of New Zealand's competitive advantage and our clean and green brand.

Canterbury is strategically important. It has more than half of the country's hydro storage and irrigation.

### There are major problems with water management in Canterbury, and the Government is addressing these.

We want well managed rivers and aquifers that provide Cantabrians with higher incomes, clean water, and a great lifestyle. We believe that:

- You should be able to swim and fish in rivers, lakes, and streams, and drink from aquifers.
- Water allocation needs to be well planned, provide for minimum environmental flows, and ensure we get most value from the remaining water.
- Water storage and irrigation projects that meet environmental standards, and that make good economic sense, should happen within a decent time frame.



Your views about the changes we have made are important. Please take the time to read this pamphlet, complete the response form, and return it freepost to your local National MP. We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

John Key  
Prime Minister

## WHY WE'VE ACTED – Enormous and Unprecedented Problems

Fresh water is hugely important to Canterbury. However, there has been a failure to effectively manage water use, protect water quality, and make progress on water storage.

### Problems with Canterbury's Water

- Canterbury lacks a water plan
- Environment Canterbury was the country's worst council for processing resource consents
- An independent review found enormous and unprecedented problems at Environment Canterbury

The Canterbury Regional Council (Environment Canterbury) was established 19 years ago but it still does not have a water plan in place.

A 2009 Ministry for the Environment report<sup>1</sup> rated the Environment Canterbury as the worst of 84 councils for processing resource consents. Thousands of consents were being processed in an ad hoc way without any proper framework.

The Government couldn't ignore these problems, and we commissioned an independent review into Environment Canterbury.

The review report was damning. It concluded that the gap between the water problem and Environment Canterbury's capability was "enormous and unprecedented". It said central government intervention was "not only warranted but urgent". And it warned "failure to intervene would lead to continued lack of progress in water management in Canterbury".

Canterbury's 10 mayors and councils, Ngai Tahu, Federated Farmers, Local Government NZ, the Canterbury Employers' Chamber of Commerce, Irrigation NZ, the Environmental Defence Society, and the Water Rights Trust called on the Government to intervene.

The Government wasn't confident that a highly politicised and divided council would be able to sort out these problems. We had little option but to step in.

<sup>1</sup>[www.mfe.govt.nz/publications/rma/annual-survey/2007-2008/index.html](http://www.mfe.govt.nz/publications/rma/annual-survey/2007-2008/index.html)

## WHAT WE'VE DONE – Appointing Temporary Commissioners

In March the Government responded. We passed the Environment Canterbury (Temporary Commissioners and Improved Water Management) Act 2010.

The Act replaced Environment Canterbury councillors with temporary commissioners and gave them new powers to:

- Fast track the completion of a water plan for Canterbury.
- Enable moratoria to be placed on new water takes in areas lacking water.
- Manage water conservation orders in the region.

The Act also gave statutory recognition to the Canterbury Water Management Strategy. This strategy was put together by stakeholders and councils as a way to develop a water plan and move forward on water.

The commissioners, led by Dame Margaret Bazley, are accountable to the Government and to Canterbury's elected councils. They will be required to consult with the Canterbury community on all decisions just as Environment Canterbury would have under the Local Government and Resource Management Acts.

### Making Progress

The commissioners are already making progress. They have:

- Convened the Hurunui-Waiaru Zone Committee. This is an important step towards a more collaborative approach to freshwater management in Canterbury.
- Reduced Environment Canterbury's planned rates rise from 8.7 per cent to 3.3 per cent for this financial year.
- Placed a moratorium on new water takes from the Hurunui River and its tributaries from 1 August 2010 to 1 October 2011. This will provide a breathing space so that stakeholders can develop a balanced plan for the Hurunui before deciding on proposals for irrigation development and water conservation orders.



## THE NEXT STEPS FOR CANTERBURY'S WATER

Legislation allows for new elections for Environment Canterbury when the commissioners have put a **water plan** in place and completed their other tasks. This will be no later than the local body elections in 2013.

In the meantime, we are working to improve water management in Canterbury and around New Zealand.



We have started **phase two of our Resource Management Act reforms**, which are critical to achieving our aims of growing the economy while protecting the environment. This includes the New Start for Fresh Water initiative.

Last year as part of this we started the **Land and Water Forum**. This is a nationwide collaborative dialogue with farmers, iwi, conservationists, power companies, irrigators, and recreational groups on water reform issues. We are expecting to receive a report on the Forum shortly.

We are also establishing an **Environmental Protection Authority** that will take a greater role in setting stronger nationwide standards for water.

The Government is optimistic that we can deliver a step change in water management that will see improvements in Canterbury's water quality, water allocation, and opportunities for greater water storage.

We are yet to decide on the right structure for managing water in the long term in Canterbury. That's why we're keen to hear from you, and to keep you up to date on our progress.

### Complete the Response Form

Please fill out the form to the right, separate it from this pamphlet, fold it in half, seal it with tape around the edges, and return it freepost to your National MP. Thank you for taking the time to share your views.

## RESPONSE FORM - We Want to Hear from You

1. Do you agree with the actions the Government has taken to replace Environment Canterbury councillors with temporary commissioners?

Yes  No  Not sure

2. Which water issues concern you the most (rank from 1 to 4, with 1 being the most important):

- Allocation of water consents  
 Drinking water quality  
 Water storage and infrastructure  
 Water quality in lakes and rivers for recreation

3. When would you like to see new elections for Environment Canterbury?

- Immediately  
 Once commissioners have a water plan in place for Canterbury  
 Local body elections 2013  
 Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

4. I'd like to receive further updates on:

- Future changes to Canterbury's water management  
 Changes to the Resource Management Act  
 National's Bluegreens work and programme

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

I'd like to receive further updates on:

- The Economy  Education  
 Law and Order  Health

John Key's fortnightly email newsletter "Key Notes"

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Mobile Phone: \_\_\_\_\_



## GETTING IT RIGHT - Protecting Our Water

As the Minister of Conservation and a Canterbury resident, I'm very aware of how important water is to our region, and I know how concerned many Cantabrians are about the management of our most important resource.

It's easy to take for granted that the rivers in which we fish, the lakes in which we swim, and the aquifers from which we drink are clean, clear, and safe. With increasing pressure from sectors like agriculture and electricity, it's vital we get the balance right to protect the integrity of our water and create a sustainable water plan for the future.

In April, the Government appointed seven commissioners to Environment Canterbury, led by Dame Margaret Bazley, to fix water management problems in our region. The commissioners have first-rate skills in public service, governance, the judiciary, and business, and come from environmental, agricultural, and electricity backgrounds.

I hope this pamphlet helps you to understand why we are making changes to Canterbury's water management, and I look forward to receiving your feedback.

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