



Media Statement

March 30, 2010

- Irrigation NZ response to government's decision to appoint commissioners to Environment Canterbury

Irrigation NZ supports Ministers' decision to oust councillors

Irrigation NZ supports government's decision to oust Environment Canterbury councillors and the consequent appointment of commissioner leadership to address Canterbury's lack of a proper allocation plan and failure to progress opportunities for optimal water management.

The major leader of irrigation farmers in New Zealand applauds the administering of additional powers under proposed legislation to address the urgent challenges surrounding water in Canterbury.

This is positive and most definitely in the right direction – water is too important in Canterbury and the wider New Zealand economy to be used as a political football as ECan councillors have done in the past, Irrigation NZ (INZ) chairman Graeme Sutton said today.

"INZ is in total support of Ministers Nick Smith and Rodney Hide's decision that in the main is what has to happen to open the way forward to create opportunity in a fresh start for the Canterbury region and ultimately the New Zealand economy," Sutton said.

Efficient water management is critical to New Zealand's competitive advantage and Canterbury is strategically important holding more than half of the country's irrigation water and hydro storage.

While the announcement today contains some wide sweeping direction that still needs better understanding and greater detail INZ is totally behind a fresh start for the Canterbury region and as a major stakeholder is willing and able to roll up its sleeves to help shape the new future for Canterbury's water in respect to the rural water point of view.

INZ is adamant that the Canterbury Water Management Strategy (CWMS) is an important work stream that needs to be incorporated into the new authority and that all the excellent work that has been achieved through this process should not be lost.

“Building on this CWMS process is vital if win-win outcomes are to be realised and responsibility correctly identified and addressed to ensure that Canterbury’s potential in environmental and economic terms are realised by way of irrigated agriculture.”

Sutton said INZ will continue to advocate for a separate water authority believing Canterbury water is big enough to stand alone as an entity and not be fragmented among several unitary authorities

“With 70% of NZ’s consumptive water use being in Canterbury and the often conflicting interests of stakeholders it is important that the way forward for water management enables balanced and sustainable outcomes,” Sutton concluded.

Further comment: Graeme Sutton phone 0274 449673

Irrigation NZ

Irrigation NZ is a national body representing all irrigation interests in a unified voice to promote excellence in irrigation development and efficient water management based on the principles of responsible and sustainable water management throughout New Zealand.