



## **Media Statement**

**July 21, 2010**

### **Moratorium demonstrates ‘common sense’ – Irrigation NZ**

Government’s approval for a moratorium on water take consent applications for the Hurunui River demonstrates common sense in a case where no proper water plan exists says Irrigation NZ chairman Graeme Sutton.

“The moratorium is there for a reason and that is to allow the Canterbury Water Management Strategy (CWMS) to address the future of the Hurunui River in a community-focused plan.”

Irrigation NZ commends Environment Minister Nick Smith’s approval for Environment Canterbury commissioners to place the moratorium on new water takes.

The moratorium will take in the Hurunui River and its tributaries and will run from July 23, 2010 to October 1, 2011.

Sutton said with no plan the current situation was messy and not likely to achieve a process that can balance all community needs taking in the economic development and environmental sustainability of the Hurunui River.

The moratorium will provide breathing space for the recently appointed Hurunui-Waiau zone committee to develop a balanced and comprehensive plan for the Hurunui River ahead of major decisions on proposals for irrigation development and water conservation orders that will impact upon the future of the river.

Sutton expressed concern over water conservations orders in respect to their effectiveness and relevance in today’s environment.

“It could be fair to say conservation orders are outdated and would not be the right vehicle to set water allocation.”

Irrigation NZ believes water allocation and limits should be set by the Natural Resources Regional Plan (NRRP) that takes into account the wider balancing act in terms of sustainable environmental, social and economic community outcomes.

The Minister received a letter from the commissioners on Monday seeking to use the special moratorium process of the Environment Canterbury Act and following consultation with Cabinet and Caucus, approved the proposal yesterday.

The effect of a moratorium on existing applications for water consents would be to place the applications on hold until six months after the end of the moratorium. Existing resource consents would not be affected by a moratorium. Any new consent applications submitted while a moratorium is in force would not be processed and would be returned to the applicant as soon as practicable.

ECan commissioners will make the final decision on the moratorium at a special council meeting (tomorrow) July 22.

**Further comment: Graeme Sutton phone 0274 449673**

**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 NZ.**