



**SUBMISSION: DISCUSSION DOCUMENT -  
IMPROVING OUR RESOURCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM**

*Date:* 30/04/15  
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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andrew Curtis", with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

**(Andrew Curtis, CEO IrrigationNZ)**

IrrigationNZ is happy to provide further comment as required.

**OVERVIEW**

1. IrrigationNZ (INZ) is a national body that promotes excellence in irrigation. INZ represents the interests of over 3,600 irrigators (irrigation schemes and individual irrigators) totaling over 360,000ha of irrigation (over 50% of NZ's irrigated area). It also represents the interests of the majority of irrigation service providers (over 140 researchers, manufacturers, distributors, designers, installers and consultants).
2. A discussion on the future of Environment Canterbury was held at INZ's quarterly 'Irrigator Forum'. Over 30 representatives from Canterbury irrigation schemes and irrigator user groups were present. The following submission reflects the consensus from this.

## **SUBMISSION SUMMARY**

- A. Support the proposed mixed-model governance structure for Environment Canterbury**
- B. Support Environment Canterbury continue to be responsible for the function and services of a typical Regional Council**
- C. Reject the new hybrid governance model continue with the powers set out under the Environment Canterbury Act**
- D. Require the existing commissioners [at least three] transition to the new appointed member positions**
- E. Require further consideration and subsequent clarity as to how the sub-regional community decision making processes (zone committees) continue and improve their effectiveness under the new mixed-model governance structure**
- F. Require an additional area of Central Canterbury (Selwyn zone) be added to the four proposed constituency areas, but accept this will be subject to a representation review process**

### ***Specific Comments***

- A. Support the proposed mixed-model governance structure for Environment Canterbury**
  - 3. INZ believes in a democratic approach to local government decision making, however INZ also believes in the principles of good governance. A mixed model makes much sense for the successful delivery of both. Key to this is the elected representatives recognising their collective strengths and weaknesses, and subsequently being involved in the appointment of individuals to address this.
  - 4. Government needs to better consider how the appointment process would work. There are two key points to consider in doing this and both involve how to avoid accusations of governance capture or interference, either by a majority of the elected representatives or alternatively the government of the day.
- B. Support Environment Canterbury continue to be responsible for the function and services of a typical Regional Council**
  - 5. After careful consideration INZ believes that Environment Canterbury should continue to be responsible for the function and services undertaken by a Regional Council. Whilst there is merit in the creation of a dedicated Canterbury Water Authority, there is no logical existing structure with whom the other minority

functions and services could be transferred. It would be inefficient to create a new structure for these, and they should therefore remain within Environment Canterbury.

6. There is however an argument for the public transport component to be transferred to the respective city and district councils. Conversely there is also much merit that a region wide approach remains. INZ is undecided as to which option is best as this falls outside of the organisations purpose.

**C. Reject the new hybrid governance model continue with the powers set out under the Environment Canterbury Act**

7. INZ believes that a collaborative approach to community decision making is the most effective means of achieving enduring outcomes for freshwater. However until greater weight is given to the collaborative agreement there is much risk. The 'one stop shop' hearings process may undermine the agreement and importantly the considerable social capital created through it. This scenario has already occurred in the Hurunui and to a much lesser extent the recent Selwyn-Waihora decision. INZ strongly believes that 'merit appeals' should be allowed where the hearings decision differs from that of the collaboration.
8. The appropriate mechanism for implementing the considerations raised above is through the RMA reform process, not a re-jigging of the Environment Canterbury Act. The new Environment Canterbury mixed-model governance structure should therefore not continue with, or an adaption thereof, the powers set out under the Environment Canterbury Act.

**D. Require the existing commissioners [at least three] transition to the new appointed member positions**

9. Over the last five years there has been much intellectual capital built up by the Environment Canterbury commissioners, notably in the implementation of the Canterbury Water Management Strategy and in the Christchurch rebuild. INZ believes it is important this knowledge is successfully transferred to the new mixed governance model. The best mechanism to achieve this is for at least three commissioners to remain as appointed members.

**E. Require further consideration and subsequent clarity as to how the sub-regional community decision making processes (zone committees) continue and improve their effectiveness under the new mixed-model governance structure**

10. The discussion document fails to address how the continuously improving zone committee process will fit within the mixed-model and continue to evolve within it.

The zone committees, with a couple of exceptions that are now back on track, have become the ultimate democratic process - local people understanding and buying-in to local issues and subsequently finding local solutions for them.

11. INZ believes the point above is critical to the success of any future governance model for the region. Without proper consideration of this five years of good work could be quickly unraveled.
12. The solution likely involves the elected representatives becoming actively involved in the zone committees, as opposed to being alienated and feeling they have to make a point of difference to allow for their re-election.

**F. Require an additional area of Central Canterbury (Selwyn zone) be added to the four proposed constituency areas, but accept this will be subject to a representation review process**

13. With the exception of public transport, the services and functions of Environment Canterbury are predominantly focused upon the rural environment. It is therefore important that the seven elected representatives better reflect this. INZ suggests that the rural area is re-looked at and instead broken down into four rural constituencies (North Canterbury, Central Canterbury, Mid Canterbury and South Canterbury) and Christchurch.

**INZ SUBMISSION ENDS**