



Ministry for the
Environment
Manatū Mō Te Taiao

Status Report

Minister for the Environment

Minister for Climate Change Issues

Week beginning 1 March 2010



Seen by Hon Dr Nick Smith

Date _____

1. **Actions from the meeting of 22 February 2010**

- 1.1 **ECan Review** – We will identify an MfE contact person for Environment Canterbury. We will also provide draft versions of the Cabinet paper to your office for your comment this week. **In Progress.**

Kevin Currie

5. **Major Media Items from the past week**

- 5.1 **Coverage on Environment Canterbury and the ‘Creech Report’** – Articles (written both before and after the release of the report) tended to focus on whether commissioners would be called in if the performance did not lift, the poor management of water allocation in Canterbury and delays in the resource consent processing times. The Weekend Press (20 February) quoted Wyatt Creech as saying that the issues in Canterbury are much more serious than the public realises and that ‘the country is paying the price’. The article states that the ‘Creech Report’ found that there was ‘a “science-led” rather than a “science-informed” approach’ and that ECan’s consenting processes ‘suffered from inadequate staffing, lack of skills, leadership and RMA planning’.

The Otago Daily Times (20 February) quotes Alec Neill as saying that he hoped the government would move promptly to make the decisions on what recommendations it would implement. The article states that Mr Neill did not see the report as a template for similar government changes to other regional councils - he sees this as a specific solution for Canterbury.

Newstalk ZB (25 February) spoke to you regarding your rejections of Russel Norman’s suggestions that the group set up to undertake the ECan review was biased towards farmers. Dr. Norman asserted that the recommendations to remove the council and its control over water consents was “undemocratic and favours farming interests.” The story then quoted you as being disappointed that Dr Norman had chosen to personally attack the review’s leader, Wyatt Creech and that you would “...urge Russel Norman, rather than to get into those sorts of personal attacks on individuals, that he actually focuses on the report and what it said.”

One News (24 February) reported on the meetings that were held in Christchurch with Environment Canterbury councillors. The newsreader said that the councillors were trying to convince you and Minister Rodney Hide that they shouldn’t be fired. The piece went on to say that a review of the regional council has suggested sacking the councillors and setting up a new authority to deal with water. In this story, you are quoted as saying “that there is a serious problem with water management in Canterbury and government is going to have to take a greater interest if we are going to be able to deal with this huge strategic issue”. The newsreader ended the story by saying that no date had been set for a final decision on the council’s fate.

- 5.2 **Zonal Committees for Canterbury Water Management** - An article in the Timaru Herald (24 February) reports on Christchurch Mayor Bob Parker’s confirmation that the Canterbury mayoral forum agreed to continue with work on the Canterbury water management strategy, which proposes to devolve water issues into local zonal committees. The committees would feature a mix of elected members from interest groups such as Ngai Tahu, Forest and Bird and Federated Farmers. The article notes that although you and Local Government Minister Rodney Hide would appoint the

committee members, this would be reviewed after three to five years in order to give consideration to any alternatives. In the article, Mr Parker acknowledges that ECan would have provided the bulk of the proposed strategy's research. He also asserts that even if ECan were relieved of water issues, many of its former staff would still be able to provide support to whatever proposal was implemented.