HIGHLY PRODUCTIVE LAND

I am very much in favour and support a National Policy Statement that will protect highly productive land to ensure its availability for primary production, with the proviso that the primary production is not to the detriment of the environment which we as nation are now facing due to the impacts of nitrates in our aquifers as a direct result of the intensification of the dairy industry on said highly productive land.

I am very much in favour that highly productive land should be protected from inappropriate subdivisions, use and development.

ESSENTIAL FRESHWATER

Whatever National Policy Statement that is decided on, it MUST focus on the protection of fresh water quality and drinking water supplies across the length and breadth of Aotearoa/New Zealand for now and into the future. Water is life! No water, no life! If we as a nation, and you as a Government, do not set in place measures to protect this precious commodity, and implement corrective measures to reverse past damage caused to water sources and aquifers from which cities draw drinking water from, it may soon be more precious than gold.

Our nations international image is based on “Pure, Clean, Green”. That is something that cannot be bought or manufactured, and yet it is an image that is being quickly eroded due to the environmental damage that is being done.

It is time to press pause! It is time to put a halt to pollutants entering waterways and river systems, including pollutants from the agricultural primary sector and manufacturing industries.

URBAN INTENSIFICATION

A generic blanket policy is not optimal for the main centres of Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Each of our cities is unique to one another in terms of geography, topography, existing character and amenity, as well as population size and existing transport infrastructure, and each has their own growth pressures.

A one rule fits all is NOT the way to go.

For example, in terms of topography and infrastructure, Wellington is physically quite restricted as to where new housing can be constructed due to the steeply sloping land in the Wellington Region. Wellington does have a very well-developed rail and bus network that is very well utilised and provides some of the best public transport in NZ.
Christchurch on the other hand does not have that infrastructure in place, and due to the flat terrain allows for far more options as to where housing can be built. That is not to say that there should be unrestricted wall to wall housing blanketing the metropolitan area. There should be green belts retained in order to break up urban sprawl. These will also serve to provide corridors for wildlife to travel and still live in the city, while retaining a connection to nature for the population.

Looking at the comparison between Wellington and Christchurch in terms of character and amenity, the two cities are very different to one another.

Wellington’s Mt Victoria (and parts of Mt Cook and Newtown), are well known for the heritage architecture of Victorian timber houses, and the Green Belt that rings the city provides Wellingtonians with the inarguable amenity of having a lush green vista to look out on, as well as a chorus of tui, kaka, and other native birds filling the air.

Christchurch has a very different vista, and the amenity consequently is also very different. Christchurch is currently a city recovering from a devastating earthquake. It is a city scarred by mother nature’s destructive force, and a city that has lost a lot of amenity in the form of heritage buildings. It is a city were money driven developers are profiteering by constructing identical row after row of high density housing compounds that are devoid of character and architectural variety, and often on land where the developers have clear felled all pre-existing trees in order to squeeze in as many units as possible rather than planning around them and maintaining a connection to nature for the residents to enjoy.

Not only is this at the expense of the environment, the expense of the pre-existing neighbouring properties privacy, but also neighbourhood amenity due to the loss of the trees and associated wildlife and connection to nature.

Large areas of land are being transformed into motel-like carparks in these developments. Where previously the land on these properties had the capability to absorb rain, the rain is now falling on these carparks, gets funnelled into gutters and stormwater grates and collectively forms huge volumes of storm water pouring out into the rivers, along with all the pollutants that flows off these vast car parks. The cumulative effect of the intensification of urban development is that it is not good for the environment, and in Christchurch it is also not good for the mental well-being of the population in a city whose residents have suffered enormous trauma through no fault of their own.

The National Policy Statement on Urban Development should be setting more stringent regulations in place for a city like Christchurch to ensure that what developers are doing in Christchurch is not allowed to continue; that character suburbs and neighbourhoods are protected and preserved, and that large trees on private land is also given protection in order to ensure our cities do not become incredibly monotonous, devoid of individual character, charm, heritage, and aren’t smothered with wall to wall housing that does not allow for back yards for swings to be hung from the bough of a tree, for children to play, or residents to have a vegetable garden to grow and harvest their own produce.

The National Policy Statement on Urban Development should also be setting stringent regulations to protect character suburbs such as Mt Victoria in Wellington so that it is not lost to money hungry developers out to make a quick buck at the expense of future generations.

Submission by Greg Partridge re the National Policy Statement on Urban Development
SUMMARY

I think there is merit in the Government giving thought to developing a policy on urban development, but it MUST be holistically interwoven: it MUST NOT be to the detriment of the environment, the existing residents, the character of neighbourhoods, or the amenity of them either.

Enforceable regulations (not just guidelines) must be implemented in order to halt developers bulldozering their way through properties, damaging to the land, vandalising the environment, destroying the character of heritage neighbourhoods, and critically, a complete ban on clear felling of trees in urban centres in order to preserve and retain well established trees.