Submissions of the Chatham Islands Council regarding the Essential Freshwater Package

The Chatham Islands Council thanks the Minister for the Environment for considering its submission on the Essential Freshwater Package. While the Chatham Islands Council considers the Package may be necessary for ensuring freshwater improvements on mainland New Zealand, it does not consider the Package is an appropriate intervention for the isolated Chatham Islands territory.

The Chatham Islands Council seeks exemption from the proposals in the Package because it considers the proposal to be overly onerous when applied to the unique context of the Chatham Islands.

Many characteristics of the Chatham Islands make them distinctive from mainland New Zealand and result in a unique freshwater resource management context.

The Chatham Islands, situated more than 800 km from mainland New Zealand, have a population of around 660 people, over an area of 966km$^2$ (most of the population are located on Chatham Island which is 920km$^2$). The Chatham Islands Council was established as the territorial authority for the Chatham Islands Territory under special legislation (Chatham Islands Council Act 1995). The Chatham Islands Council has the functions, powers and duties under the Resource Management Act 1991 of both a territorial authority and a regional council. The majority of the Chatham Islands Council’s funding for these functions is provided by Central Government (Department of Internal Affairs).

Due to limited ground and surface water sources on the Islands, the majority of water consumed is collected rainwater. Groundwater is available in some locations, including for town water supply, although the number of groundwater takes has not been assessed. Surface water is also available but not reliable year-round. The presence of large areas of peat make much of the ground and surface water unsuitable for human consumption or for use as stock water.

While there are larger farms on the Chatham Islands, farming can generally be described as subsistence farming, rather than commercial farming. Farming on the Islands is generally not profitable in a commercial sense (i.e. most farmers would have additional income sources) due to costs related with shipping. Fertilisers, such as super phosphate, are generally not used. The constraints of water source, remote location, poor availability of fertilisers, lack of infrastructure and difficult access to markets have created a naturally limited farming system that is unique in the New Zealand context. Those natural constraints

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mean farming operations on the Chatham Islands are small, with low stock numbers and have less potential for causing adverse environmental effects than farms on the mainland.

The small population density (about 1 person per 2km), with small settlements and limited industrial development, mean that commercial, industrial and residential discharges to surface and groundwater are generally small and adverse environmental effects are minor and well managed.

This lack of development pressure and natural limitations on agricultural growth mean that a complex freshwater planning framework may not be as necessary on for the Chatham Islands as it might be in other parts of New Zealand. Pests such as pigs and swans pose a far greater risk to freshwater quality than farming operations on the Islands. The proposed requirements of the Essential Freshwater Package are overly-onerous and not reflective of the lack of environmental pressure experienced on the Chatham Islands. Directing resources towards giving effect to the Essential Freshwater Package will divert focus and limited funding from addressing more pressing environmental risks to the Islands such as biosecurity, or more likely future risks such as tourism and aquaculture.

Implementing the Essential Freshwater Package will place significant costs on farmers, particularly regarding fencing, certification and auditing of Farm Environment Plans and ongoing compliance monitoring. The costs to farmers on the Chatham Islands will be significantly higher than the costs to farmers on the mainland as transport for both goods and services (i.e. fenceposts, contractors and farm planning professionals) greatly impacts costs. Low stocking densities and the type of stock farmed will mean that fencing costs will significantly outweigh any minor effect created from stock access to water.

Implementing the Essential Freshwater Package will also impact on community resilience. Farming on the Chatham Island’s is largely undertaken to benefit the family directly caring for the stock. Increasing the costs of keeping stock could result in food shortages, particularly in the event of a natural disaster that effects shipping and port infrastructure.

Relief sought

1. The Chatham Island’s Council seek amendment to the Essential Freshwater Package that recognises the unique freshwater resource management context of the Chatham Island’s through exempting the Chatham Island’s Council from the duty to give effect to the proposed provisions of Essential Freshwater Package including:
   - The proposed National Policy Statement on Freshwater Management
   - The s360 stock exclusion regulations; and
   - National Environmental standards requiring audited Farm Environment Plans

2. If the preferred relief set out in point 1 above cannot be achieved, the Chatham Island’s Council ask that the Minister considers:
   - exempting the Chatham Islands Council from needing to implement those parts of the package that will impose a greater cost on the Chatham Islands Community than the rest of New Zealand (the National Environmental Standards and stock exclusion regulations); and
• providing the Chatham Islands Council with the necessary resources to develop a planning framework that gives effect to the NPS-FM to the extent necessary to manage the actual environmental pressures experienced on the Islands.

[Signature]

Chief Executive Officer
Chatham Islands Council