

Tuesday 25th April, 2017

Submission on the proposed Clean Water Package 2017

To the Clean Water Consultation 2017,

This submission is from Zachary Milner

I can be contacted at:

[REDACTED]

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I am making this submission to express my disapproval of the proposed 'Clean Water Package 2017'. I believe that the content of this collection of initiatives does not align with our country's environmental, societal, or economic requirements for the future.

New Zealand's environment has been progressively degraded since human settlement. We have been lucky that our relatively late European settlement and therefore small population has meant that our environment is in better condition than many other countries. However, although the value of the environment is now widely understood and accepted, we continue to have severe and potentially irreversible impacts on our natural ecosystems. For freshwater in particular, many species which have developed over millions of years have become at risk in a matter of decades. We must connect our actions to the consequences.

A healthy environment underpins a healthy society. It cannot be expressed more directly than the fact that clean water is required for life. Other countries would do anything for the quality of water we have. We must learn from those countries which have lost their freshwater resource and thus preserve and enhance our own. The value of clean freshwater is difficult to put into monetary terms but can be achieved; for example, the future benefit of not having to build a water treatment plant for drinking water.

Economic arguments appear to be the only reason for not having stronger freshwater standards, yet these arguments are short-sighted and unsensible. For example, agriculture in New Zealand does not fully capture the costs to freshwater quality. Instead, we all pay the price. Not only is this unfair but it restricts the potential of agriculture in New Zealand. Agriculture requires large quantities of clean water for their production process so by compromising this now, will hamper the industry in the future. Furthermore, we cannot remain competitive in a global market by producing products which are the same as countries such as China which can produce them far cheaper. Instead, we must embrace our green image and create a superior product based on actual sustainable policies. 'Green washing' the world will only last so long. In a similar respect, our tourism industry is based upon our clean green image. To undermine this is to jeopardize this industry.

Past generations have grown up knowing only clean water. I am part of the young generation who has grown up with an increasing number of waterways which are off limits for swimming due to degradation. I have read through the proposed 'Clean Water Package 2017' and agree with Dr Russell Death of Massey University that it is "too confusing." I also agree with Dr Marc Schallenberg of the University of Otago that there does not appear to be any demonstration that these new standards are tougher than the old ones. I condemn, alongside Dr Mike Joy of Massey University, the shifting of goalposts for E. Coli levels. I believe we need stronger leadership on this most serious of issues, rather than a focus on the short-term requirements of primary industry.

In conclusion, this debate is not environment versus economy; it is environment, society, and the long term economic stability of New Zealand versus the short term economic benefits for a small number of New Zealanders. We must incorporate the environmental externalities into the true cost of the industries which are degrading freshwater. I want freshwater standards which increase quality to a

higher level across more waterways in a quicker time period and without shifting standards. Without smart leadership and foresight, we will follow other countries to their tragic loss of water quality, except this time we are fully aware of the consequences to our actions.