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Submission to the Resource Management Amendment Bill

Public Access New Zealand Inc. (PANZ) is a non-registered charitable trust, based in the province of Otago, in the South Island.

Management is vested in a board of trustees from throughout New Zealand, all with strong commitments to furthering the interests of outdoor recreationists.

We are funded by subscriptions and donations from Subscribing Supporters throughout New Zealand, and a few overseas. We are completely independent of Government and are non-aligned to any political party.

Research-based advocacy

PANZ bases its advocacy on research, clear objectives, and a determination that comes from first-hand knowledge and love of the outdoors. We collaborate with kindred organisations who share our concerns.

PANZ advocates rights of access for all forms of public recreation.

PANZ is tackling issues central to the concerns of recreationists throughout New Zealand.

Since its inception in 1991, the RMA has had severe detrimental effects on New Zealand.

When it was enacted, the RMA repealed 78 statutes and regulations, and amended numerous others, to provide a single piece of legislation for the management of land, water, soil and air throughout New Zealand.

Despite several attempts at “tinkering” with the problems, it has continued to become a major millstone around New Zealand’s neck.

PANZ submits that this Bill is simply further tinkering with a Bill that attempts to modify an Act that is simply not fit for purpose.

As an outdoor recreation advocacy, we do not wish to comment on urban effects of the RMA and this Bill. We will instead concentrate on the deficiencies with respect to rural areas.

Simon Upton reportedly (and infamously) said that his changes to the Palmer-drafted RMA would allow people to do what they want with their own land. Whilst this may sound emboldening, it has led to disastrous environmental impacts.

Under the Town and Country Planning Act, rural land use was allocated zones whereby the land had permitted use according to its nature – ie arable lands for agriculture, pasture for grazing/dairy etc.

Now we see huge swages of land in monoculture totally unsuitable to soil types. Forestry in massive blocks creating sediment run-off – especially during logging. As well as an acidic soil.

Likewise in places such as Marlborough and Wairarapa we see massive vineyards occupying lands that could be far more productive if utilised correctly.

Trying to beat Mother Nature by creating artificial pasture for dairy in places such as the Canterbury Plains or parts of Hawke's Bay to the real detriment of water sources and leaching run-off of nitrates into streams. Aquifers are drying up yet dairy seems hell-bent on expansion in such low rain-fall areas.

Added to Canterbury's woes, massive water extraction and export at zero benefit to Kiwi's continues unabated, adding further to low water supplies and severe degradation of fresh water quality.

Although portions of this Bill provide some optimism regarding improvement to fresh water health, the outcomes seem driven by an ever expanding bureaucracy

It is also encouraging to note that some non-notified consents may be abolished, something we support, however we believe ALL non-notifiable consents that affect populations should be abolished. Having DOC drop tonnes of 1080 into water supplies of many parts of the Country, including our highest-density City of Auckland is outrageous. Likewise any consent that affects a broad population should never be "secret" (ie non-notifiable) and any citizen should have a lawful right to know what is being proposed incidentally with use of public money, consider and object and be heard.

Sadly the Current RMA has done nothing but create a huge mega-bureaucracy stifling growth, raising the cost of so many things for both individuals, families and business. Delays are unacceptably long for the most simple of requests, as are the costs associated with them. Lawyers bank accounts are the only beneficiary.

The RMA has become disabling and a monstrous gravy train for the planning industry and legal profession that has grown up around it.

Environmental impacts have become so horrendous that even the most serious actions taken now would take a generation to effect significant results. We once had world-renowned fishing rivers and streams, many now lost – maybe forever. Having Rivers "wadeable" is hardly a measure of "Clean, Green New Zealand" – if swimming could make people ill then the water is polluted – simple.

PANZ therefore submits that the current RMA is completely unfit for purpose and should be repealed and/or replaced. We would expect Government to consider carefully any replacement process and not rush through complex legislation without thorough consideration and consultation as has been witnessed of late.

It should be noted that within PANZ trustees one person is a retired town planner and has raised the question why the Town and Country Planning Act with the concept of zoning was replaced with the cumbersome RMA.

PANZ wish to be heard in verbal submission before the Select Committee.

For and on behalf of

Public Access New Zealand Inc

Andi Cockroft
Trustee