



Federated Mountain Clubs of New Zealand (Inc.)

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PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE USE

ATTACK ON THE QUEEN'S CHAIN BY REVIEW GROUP

"The Federated Mountain Clubs were dismayed that the Resource Management Bill Review Group sought to undermine the protection of the Queens Chain," said FMC Vice-President, Hugh Barr.

" The Review Group has recommended that marginal strips (The Queens Chain round our coasts, rivers and lakes) under the Conservation Act be subject to resource management. Yet these areas are specially protected areas under the Conservation Act and should remain directly under the Minister of Conservation's control, like other reserves."

" The Review Group have also agreed with regional councils being able to arbitrarily reduce or eliminate esplanade reserves. Councils need the Minister of Conservation's approval to reduce public access under current law. It would be a retrograde step to throw away this Ministerial guardianship of public access to our lakes and coasts.

"Although it is pleasing to see that public access to waterways continues to be recognised as a matter of national importance, we are extremely concerned that public access to other areas has been deleted as a national issue," Dr Barr said

"Public access to parks and reserves, and the countryside are equally important as access to the coast. In some districts local councils have closed public roads and legal accessways to walkers, denying public access to reserves. Public access to conservation lands and through rural land along legal public accessways should be a matter of national importance for all New Zealanders and should be upheld in the Resource Management Bill.

" The Review Group's lack of understanding of the importance or the purpose of the Queen's Chain was a disappointment. Many of their arguments for a reduction in protection for marginal strips and esplanade reserves were similar to those encountered in the Conservation Law Reform Bill debate. Proposals to weaken protection for the Queen's Chain then were rejected by the public. Members on both sides of the House took note of the public's concerns, I am sure they don't want to get into another debate on the Queen's Chain! " said Dr Barr.

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