



## MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

### PRESS STATEMENT

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#### Queen's Chain not threatened by Resource Management Bill

Environment Minister Rt Hon Geoffrey Palmer today refuted Public Lands Coalition claims that the Resource Management Bill jeopardised public ownership and rights over the Queen's Chain.

"The clauses in the Bill relating to the Queen's Chain largely continue what happens under the present laws," said Mr Palmer.

"The main difference is that local authorities will have to answer to their community rather than to the Government in Wellington if they want to dispense with the requirement for an esplanade reserve.

"A local authority will have to take the reserve unless it has already been given the consent of the community through the consultation process which is required before a district scheme is approved. Part of the Bill's philosophy is to give local communities a greater say in the decisions that affect them.

"The Bill requires 20 metres to be reserved unless the district plan, which is developed through a public process, states otherwise.

Mr Palmer said the Government recognised the importance of the margins of our lakes, coastal areas and rivers. This was specifically stated in the general principles of the Bill. Furthermore, there was a section (Clause 188), which set out the purpose of esplanade reserves.

These purposes include enabling public access and recreational use of waterways and adjacent reserve land, and maintaining natural values including water quality and aquatic habitats.

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"Plans must be prepared, and decisions made in accordance with these provisions.

"I refute the Public Lands Coalition claim that the Bill allows 'easy disposal' of roads around shorelines, and unrestrained private control over roads. The Local Government Act has been amended so that when disposing of roads around shorelines, councils will make a decision in accordance with the district plan, instead of needing the consent of the Minister of Conservation."

In the case of private leasing of roads, there would be no change, as the only amendment made in the Bill had been to replace the term 'Town and Country Planning Act' with the words 'Resource Management Act.'

Mr Palmer said the Bill proposed that compensation would also be paid by the local authority now that they had greater responsibility for the esplanade reserves. A significant number of submissions had commented on this aspect of the Bill - particularly local councils. The Select Committee would be carefully considering whether any changes were needed to ensure esplanade reserves were created when land was subdivided.

"The Bill does not affect public access rights. Clause 7 of the Bill specifically allows for entry across the water and the beds of rivers and lakes as of right unless it is not permitted in the management plan, he said.

"This is to allow the control of activities like jet boating in national parks. People need to remember they will be part of the preparation of these management plans.

"The provisions allowing individual consents to use the bed of water bodies have been carried over from the Harbours Act 1950 with local authorities having greater responsibility.

"The Bill does not affect the ownership of riverbeds. Section 20 of the Acts Interpretation Act 1924 ensures this. This is another matter that may be clarified by the Select Committee.

"The Government is aware that in a Bill this size, there is bound to be some technical shortcomings. The whole purpose of the Select Committee process is to iron out these problems, and I welcome constructive comment to this end.

"Can I repeat what I said in November last year - the Government is committed to the protection of the Queen's Chain," said Mr Palmer.