

# PUBLIC LANDS COALITION

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## News Release

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### "Landcorp out of the closet"

The real reason for changes to the Queen's Chain/marginal strip legislation is beginning to emerge, according to the Public Lands Coalition.

The Public Lands Coalition, comprising Acclimatisation Societies, Federated Mountain Clubs and the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society believe Landcorp are one of the key players in pushing to change the Queen's Chain legislation.

Mr Bruce Mason researcher for the Coalition said "before Landcorp and the other SOEs came onto the scene there was no perceived need within Government for radical change to the legislation. It is now becoming apparent that Landcorp, in particular, wants ownership by way of title to the Queen's Chain. Landcorp is using scare-mongering tactics to influence the Government, Mr Mason claims.

Mr Mason was responding to a statement by Mr George McMillan, Landcorp's chief executive, in which he said that; "If the measure (*marginal strip*) was not changed tens of millions of dollars could be involved in special surveying".

Mr McMillan also said the Government had indicated it might change the legislation to take these concerns into account.

Mr Mason told the Otago Daily Times today that it was now clear that the idea of giving the adjacent land owner title to the marginal strip, rather than retain a distinct Crown-owned strip is misguided, as it is based on an erroneous assumption that huge survey costs would be involved.

Mr Mason explained that he understood high surveying costs could in most cases be avoided as the fixing of marginal strip boundaries, and their presence on publicly available maps, does not require much in the way of extra survey work.

Mr Mason's investigations have shown that in many cases a river bank, coastline or lake shore will form the boundary for the blocks of Crown land to be transferred to SOEs. The position of this boundary has to be fixed by survey methods for secure title to be issued. This is irrespective of whether the actual boundary is the edge of a river bank etc or one chain (20 metres) back from it. Little extra survey time or cost will be added by fixing the landward boundary of a marginal strip at the same time as the bank. In many cases a few minutes work by a map draughtsperson is all that is required to record a Queen's Chain on a survey plan or map.

In other cases no new field survey is necessary to define the Queen's Chain. Adequate plans can be compiled from existing survey records, Mr Mason said.

The present system whereby Queen's Chains are defined on survey maps, in Crown ownership, and reserved from sale or other forms of disposal, has proved entirely satisfactory, Mr Mason said. Crown ownership is certain, and the public can readily determine if a right of access exists along a given stretch of river or coast etc. Both considerations are critical as far as the public are concerned and must not be discarded just for administrative convenience or to accommodate the land sale ambitions of SOEs.

Mr Mason said that the PLC accepts the Government's statements that there is no intention of giving away the Queen's Chain. However the Coalition remains extremely concerned at the way the Bill is currently written as it provides for the title to the Queen's Chain to be given to the adjacent landowner.

In our view there is no necessity for this, and it creates serious legal doubts where none currently exist, Mr Mason concluded.

ENDS

Bruce Mason  
PLC Researcher