



Office of the

MINISTER OF LANDS

PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS WELLINGTON NEW ZEALAND

PRESS STATEMENT

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WINNERS ALL ROUND IN OTAGO HIGH COUNTRY DEAL

A land tenure change in the Otago high country, involving 6700ha of pastoral leasehold land on Waiorau Station in the Pisa Range, was described today by the the Minister of Lands, Denis Marshall, as "an enlightened decision that would benefit farming, tourism, recreation and conservation".

Mr Marshall, who is also the Minister of Conservation, said the deal involved the freeholding of 2735ha of former pastoral leasehold land by Waiorau Station owners, John and Mary Lee, and the allocation of the balance, 4018ha, to the Department of Conservation.

"It's a win-win situation. The deal protects conservation values and at the same it allows the Lees to further develop their tourism and commercial ventures, based on Nordic cross-country skiing and winter vehicle and tyre-testing by the motor trade."

"In recent years there have been a few such tenure changes involving pastoral leasehold land in the South Island high country but Waiorau is the largest to date and it bodes well for deals in the pipeline."

"These deals will benefit not only the farmers by creating more opportunities for them to diversify but also conservation interests through the setting aside of areas, at higher altitudes especially, that have been identified as having important natural features. In addition, the Government agencies involved in

negotiating the deals are obliged to address the issues of public access and outdoor recreation."

"At Waiorau two conservation covenants have been negotiated over the land being freeholded. The larger of the two covenants, covering 1200ha, recognises the landscape values on the Upper Cardrona faces; the other one, covering 300ha, protects historic gold workings and an old pack track in Tuohy's Gully."

"Public vehicle access on the private skifield road developed by the Lees has been secured subject to users paying a toll that will go towards maintenance. Free tramping access for the public will be available from the Cardrona Valley up to the conservation area and beyond via the pack track. The Meg Hut will come under the control of DOC."

"To facilitate Nordic skiing a recreation permit will be issued to the Lees over 400ha of the conservation land."

"In a natural history context, the Pisa Range is special."

It is the highest of the Otago block-faulted mountain ranges that make up Central Otago and it holds important alpine plant communities. Some of the plants, such as the dwarf grass *Poa Pygmea*, are rare. The bog vegetation in an area known as Tranquility is also distinctive. The plateau landscape near the summit of the range is starkly beautiful.

"The Pisa Range is also a breeding haven for black-backed gulls, pied oystercatchers, black-fronted terns and other native birds."

"The Waiorau negotiations involved public submissions, and there were a total of 29 - 24 supportive, one opposed and four which sought changes to the proposal."

"Where appropriate the negotiators accommodated the public concerns, especially on questions of public access and the conservation covenants," Mr Marshall said.

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