

WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 13 1989

MINISTER OF CONSERVATION

WOOLLASTON WELCOMES CHANGES TO QUEEN'S CHAIN LAW

Conservation Minister Philip Woollaston today welcomed the changes made to the Conservation Law Reform Bill by a Parliamentary Select Committee. "The Bill as introduced was adequate for introduction and reference to the Select Committee but, the legislation has clearly benefitted from the many submissions made on it and the work of the Committee" he said in the debate on the Committee's report.

The main changes to the Queen's Chain provisions are:

- the Crown ownership of the strips is made undisputable
- the location strips will be shown on proper plans
- strips cannot be sold. Existing strips that no longer are alongside waterways will be able to be exchanged for new ones that better provide for access or conservation
- if there are absolutely no reasons for creating a strip the Minister will still be able to waive the requirement. This will only be able to happen when Crown land is sold, as under present legislation but subject to much tighter conditions that in the Land Act 1948
- the Minister will be able to decide whether or not to appoint a manager for a strip and who that manager should be
- managers of strips will not be able to close strips. The powers of the Minister of Conservation to restrict public access onto all conservation land in exceptional circumstances will apply to the Queen's Chain. *Powers broadened from 'temporary' closure, to ability to permanently close. B.M.*
- A manager of a strip will need the Minister's approval to alter the way a strip is managed or erect any significant improvements
- it will be an offence for a manager of a strip to damage it or use it in a way that is contrary to the objectives of the strips

Mr Woollaston said the changes will allay the concerns some members of the public have about the security of public access to rivers, lakes and the seashore. "There were concerns arising from ambiguities in the original Bill" he said. "The committee has done an excellent job in removing the ambiguities and making the *intention of the legislation clear.*

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