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Media Release

EDS concerned about National's pyrotechnics

EDS is concerned about the recent announcement by Hon Simon Bridges, Leader of the Opposition, in which he has promised a "bonfire of regulations" if elected later in the year. Mr Bridges has said this "will ensure we get rid of 100 regulations in our first six months and that for every regulation introduced, two are removed." There would be a dedicated Minister for Regulatory Reduction.

"It is a big worry that within this grab bag of measures to cut red tape is a reference to repealing the Resource Management Act," said EDS senior researcher, Dr Greg Severinsen.

"Under National's plan, this would be replaced in the short term with 'transitional' legislation and ultimately with 'development-friendly' law. There is a quantum leap between tinkering with rules like the height of a chair in a hairdressing salon and repealing protections of our natural heritage.

"It is disappointing that after a thoughtful, balanced discussion document on RMA reform released by Hon Judith Collins at the end of 2019, we are now seeing much more troubling and hyperbolic language about National's reform agenda," said Dr Severinsen.

"Rather than targeting the areas that need addressing, all of our environmental protections now seem to be under threat. In particular, we have serious concerns about replacing the RMA with the vague notion of 'transitional' legislation," added EDS CEO Gary Taylor.

"We have no idea what that would look like, but presumably it would contain weaker environmental protections and be rushed through. We need to head in the opposite direction to that. Knee-jerk law is always bad law: far from providing predictability, accessibility and clarity, it would almost certainly do the reverse.

"Ultimately, we need a far more nuanced and substance-based conversation about RMA reform in election year than just the number of regulations we want, or arbitrary targets for reducing them. Environmental safeguards are not 'red tape' waiting to be cut. They are there for a reason.

"While the resource management system is in urgent need of first principles reform, as EDS has established over the past three years in its *RM System Reform* project, that does not mean just chucking the RMA in the bin and winging it over the period of time it takes to create something entirely new.

"National would be well advised to wait for the report from the Resource Management Reform Panel led by Hon Tony Randerson QC and find ways to better address our declining environmental indicators and housing needs rather than rushing into superficial, ill-considered extremes.

“We are meeting Mr Bridges shortly and will be seeking more clarity about National’s environmental reform agenda,” concluded Mr Taylor.