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**Media release**

**EDS welcomes the Randerson Panel's proposals to repeal the RMA**

EDS is broadly supportive of the report, released today, of the government's independent resource management reform panel. The report offers wide-ranging recommendations for deep, fundamental reforms.

Key recommendations include:

- Repealing the RMA
- Replacing it with a Natural and Built Environments Act with a revised purpose and principles.
- A major shift from managing environmental effects to achieving positive outcomes.
- Creating a new Strategic Planning Act, requiring the preparation of regional spatial strategies encompassing both land and the coastal marine area. These strategies would align functions across other statutes, including the new Natural and Built Environments Act, the Local Government Act, the Land Transport Management Act and the Climate Change Response Act.
- Enacting a dedicated Managed Retreat and Climate Change Adaptation Act, which would provide for managed retreat and for the establishment of a climate change adaptation fund.
- Requiring decision-makers to give effect to the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and incorporating the overarching concept of Te Mana O Te Taiao in the purpose statement of the new Natural and Built Environments Act.
- Establishing a National Māori Advisory Board to monitor the performance of central and local government in giving effect to Te Tiriti and providing for an integrated partnership process between mana whenua and councils.
- Requiring national direction to be made on a range of core matters and combining this into a coherent suite of instruments that clearly resolve conflicts and relationships between them.
- Requiring the establishment of environmental bottom lines and targets.
- Reformulating existing RMA plans into combined regional plans, reducing the 100 or so plans we have now to just 14.
- Reforming the planning process, including the establishment of joint planning committees comprising regional council, territorial authority and mana whenua representatives.
- Requiring an audit of plans by the Ministry for the Environment before they are notified.
- Altering how the notification framework operates, including removing the "no more than minor" threshold for notification of consents.
- Removing non-complying activity status.
- Providing an alternative dispute resolution pathway for minor matters.

- Strengthening the overall role of the Environment Court.
- Strengthening the framework for water conservation orders.
- Providing more flexibility to review existing resource consents.
- Providing for greater use of economic instruments to drive behaviour change.
- Establishing a nationally coordinated environmental monitoring system.
- Expanding the role of the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment to provide a stronger auditing and oversight role of the resource management system.
- Establishment of regional hubs for compliance, monitoring and enforcement.
- Strengthening offences and penalties for non-compliance.

“It has been accepted for a long time now that the current system isn’t working for the environment, business and communities,” said EDS CEO Gary Taylor.

“For several years, EDS and its business partners (Infrastructure New Zealand, the Employers and Manufacturers Association, Property Council New Zealand, and Business New Zealand) have been pushing for its review. We’ve been progressing our own extensive work programme, producing a number of comprehensive reports on the future of our system. The most recent of those was released earlier this week.”

“We are very pleased to see that the Panel has engaged deeply with the EDS project and it’s great to see alignment with many of our own findings and recommendations,” said Senior Researcher Dr Greg Severinsen, who has been leading the EDS work on system reform.

“In particular, replacing the RMA with a new piece of integrated legislation is a good step. It has become long, complex and cumbersome and has failed to protect the environment or provide for people’s wellbeing. A future system needs to be more focused on what kind of future we want, not just the things we don’t want to happen. But we note that, in contrast to some reporting we have seen today, the Panel is specifically not calling for separate legislation for planning and environment. The Panel clearly considers that integrated management provided by a single act is a good thing.

“We agree that national direction needs to be mandatory where a matter of national importance is at stake, and it needs to form a more coherent package rather than just adding a new instrument when a problem emerges. We would like to see national direction combined into a single National Environment Plan, but a comprehensive suite of well-connected National Policy Statements as recommended by the Panel would be a good first step.

“As recognised by the Panel, planning processes need to be more agile and involve true partnership with Māori. We’ve proposed an independent Futures Commission and Tikanga Commission to achieve a strong independent voice, but the Panel’s National Māori Advisory Board and strengthened role for the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment show a similar direction of thinking.

“The Panel has also recognised the importance of having a higher-level Strategic Planning Act – similar to our own calls for a Future Generations Act – under which regional spatial strategies would be made. That will be crucial to ensure that more detailed frameworks for

land use, infrastructure funding and climate change – and central government, local government, and Māori – are all singing from the same song sheet when it comes to things like urban growth and land use change. The proposed implementation agreements should mean that there is the money to support that vision.

“The Panel’s idea of having a separate statute to deal with climate change adaptation is an interesting one. The RMA has proved inadequate to deal with this challenge, and adaptation issues require us to look well beyond the RMA to property legislation, insurance settings, and the establishment of a new adaptation fund.

“In a number of areas, we would still like to see deeper change. For example, providing for a much smaller number of integrated combined regional plans would simplify the planning landscape. We would have 14 plans instead of 100. But this would be made even simpler and more efficient by the reducing the number of councils. We are over-governed.

“We’ll be delving deeply into the 500 plus page report, as the devil is always in the detail. But the report is definitely setting us on the right path.

“Finally, it’s crucial that actual change comes about as a result.

“There is cross-party support for fundamental reform, and that has to translate to action. This could be a defining moment in New Zealand’s history. But it’s essential that people take the time to work through the report thoroughly. It should not be politicised. We are asking all parties to act with restraint, not rush to judgement.

“We congratulate the Panel on its work,” concluded Dr Severinsen.