



**3 November 2020**

**Media Release**

**EDS pleasantly surprised by some Cabinet decisions**

The Cabinet line-up for environment, conservation and climate change is extremely encouraging, says the Environmental Defence Society.

“David Parker was always a shoo-in for the environment portfolio, given Labour’s commitment to reform of the resource management system. Those changes will be deep and wide-ranging. There’s no one better to meet that challenge especially given the heroic timeframe for implementation,” said EDS CEO Gary Taylor.

“What’s a big surprise is that Minister Parker is also taking responsibility for Oceans and Fisheries.

“Progress on those matters was effectively stalled by New Zealand First but now there’s an opportunity to address the concerning state of our oceans environment from estuaries out to the Exclusive Economic Zone.

“Oceans are the last frontier with very much first-generation law and policy governing their use. Deployment of less harmful fishing methods and ecosystem-based management together with marine spatial planning and marine protected areas reform would be a big improvement.

“As it happens, EDS is part-way through a major Oceans reform project, funded by the NZ Law Foundation, the Michael and Suzanne Borrin Foundation and others, so that work is now presciently well-timed.

“We also welcome the new Minister for Conservation, Kiri Allan. We have not worked with her before but look forward to discussing our other big piece of work currently underway: reform of our conservation laws, many of which are very out of date. She has a very sound platform to work on given the impressive work done by her predecessor, Eugenie Sage.

“We note that Kiri Allan is also an Associate Minister for the Environment. We suggest that she could be given responsibility for some aspects of Oceans reform, given the relevance of that to the Department of Conservation’s roles in marine mammal protection and marine protected areas. As Minister she’ll be responsible for implementing Sea Change.

“The reappointment of James Shaw as Climate Change Minister is also welcome. James has impressed with his ability to get things done under difficult circumstances in the last term; now we should be able to crack on with decarbonizing the economy and perhaps even meet our 2030 emissions reduction targets.

However, there’ll need to be strong support from other Ministers – transport, energy, agriculture, infrastructure, finance, environment – if that ambition is to be achieved. The C19 recovery offers an opportunity out of adversity to make faster progress.

“We look forward to hearing from Minister Shaw at our Climate Change and Business Conference next week.

“We are also pleased that Nanaia Mahuta has returned as Local Government Minister. She’ll be well placed to see through the Three Waters reforms that commenced on her watch.

“We also welcome her appointment as Minister of Foreign Affairs: both she and Prime Minister Ardern should push harder on the international stage for other countries, especially Australia, to adopt more progressive climate change policies. It’s time to use our collective profile to push harder for international action on the other existential threat facing the world.

“Overall, it’s a great line-up of Ministers relevant to EDS’s focused interests. We look forward to working with them to make real improvements to our environment,” Mr Taylor concluded.