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## **Media Release: Leading Environmental NGOs: Labour Party needs to support not undermine the Kermadec Ocean Sanctuary**

Labour should be working to support New Zealand's commitment to create one of the world's biggest marine sanctuaries and protect sea-life for generations to come, said representatives of leading environmental groups today.

"The Labour Party has championed the creation of a Kermadec/Rangitāhua Ocean Sanctuary at the last two elections. It now seems to be saying that its own policy is a breach of fisheries rights and the fisheries settlement," said Forest & Bird spokesperson Kevin Hackwell.

"We are concerned that Labour seems to be backing away from its commitment to create a Kermadec/Rangitāhua Ocean Sanctuary because it sees a political opportunity to attack the government," said Mr Hackwell.

EDS Chairman, Gary Taylor added "The law is very clear that along with the ability to exclusively manage fisheries within our economic zone, the government has a right and an international obligation to create marine protected areas.

"Looking after our oceans does not breach fishing rights," said Mr Taylor.

Greenpeace Executive Director Russel Norman said "Fishing quota, held by both Māori and Pakeha, has always been subject to regulation to look after the health of the oceans".

"The Labour Party now seems to be agreeing with the fishing industry that no-take marine reserves are a breach of fisheries rights and compensation needs to be given even when no fishing is taking place. This could set a precedent which makes it extremely difficult to set up a network of marine protected areas, that our oceans so badly need," said Dr Norman.

WWF-New Zealand Senior Campaigner, Alex Smith said "There have been legitimate treaty issues raised around the government process for developing the Kermadec/Rangitāhua Ocean Sanctuary. As a country we need to learn from these and set up a framework for developing marine protection that involves iwi in decision-making at every step".

"We support ongoing dialogue, but we shouldn't let TOKM and the wider fishing industry derail marine protection for the Kermadecs/Rangitāhua.

"Labour is currently buying into a dangerous fishing industry agenda, hook, line and sinker," said Alex Smith.

Gary Taylor added "TOKM has the right to go to court to have its arguments tested. But we believe its case is extremely weak, and EDS has applied to join the proceedings in the High Court".

"The Sanctuary is backed by solid science and by 89% of New Zealanders. We urge the Labour Party to honour its election commitments and play a constructive role in finding a way through," Mr Taylor concluded.

The environmental NGOs – Forest & Bird, Greenpeace, WWF-New Zealand, Pew, and EDS – stand in support of the Kermadec/Rangitāhua Ocean Sanctuary and hope a way can be found through the current issues so that all New Zealanders can together be proud to establish one of the biggest ocean sanctuaries in the world.

**Note**

Labour's position is available at -

<http://www.radionz.co.nz/national/programmes/morningreport/audio/201816797/kermadec-sanctuary-issue-mishandled-by-government-little>