



Media Release

22 December 2016

Settlement reached over Mackenzie Country court case

The Mackenzie District Council and the Environmental Defence Society have reached an agreement that settles EDS's Declaration Proceedings regarding land conversion in the Mackenzie District.

The settlement involves a commitment from the Council, subject to its statutory duties, to introduce a Plan Change before Christmas that will temporarily suspend the exemption provisions from its district plan for a period of 12 months. The expectation is that within that time completely new plan provisions will be put in place. The Environment Court made orders late yesterday effectively endorsing the approach.

"The agreement removes what EDS regards as a loophole in the plan that meant vegetation clearance could occur without land use consents being required," said EDS CEO Gary Taylor.

"That meant that tussock grassland and other significant vegetation could be cleared with impunity, in spite of the ecological and landscape values.

"We consider that in agreeing to this settlement the Council has acted properly and in accordance with the objectives of the Resource Management Act and having regard to the national importance of the Mackenzie Country."

The CEO of the Council, Wayne Barnett, said that the Council is pleased with the outcome that provides greater certainty about its plan.

"Our agreement is to take the required procedural steps to notify a very focused plan change and have it take legal effect before Christmas. That is of course subject to Council's statutory duties," said Mr Barnett.

"That will give us time to then move ahead with Plan Change 13 which is being heard in the Environment Court in the New Year. I expect PC13 will put in place new provisions later in 2017 that should provide an improved policy framework for the future of the Basin," said Mr Barnett.

Both Mr Taylor and Mr Barnett agreed that the longer-term objective for the Mackenzie District is to give effect to the Mackenzie Forum's Shared Vision Statement which was agreed between stakeholders including a wide range of local interests and charts a way forward for farming, tourism and conservation objectives to be met over time.

See the Environment Court decision [here](#).