

Media Release

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Focused leadership required to advance freshwater reform

A centralised freshwater management system is critical to advancing New Zealand's economy and quality of life and needs to be put in place with some urgency, the New Zealand Council for Infrastructure Development's chief executive Stephen Selwood, said today.

He was responding to Environment Minister Nick Smith's confirmation that Government intends to give immediate priority to making final decisions on a new National Policy Statement on Freshwater this year.

"We welcome this confirmation," said Mr Selwood. "An efficient freshwater management system is critical to everyone – industry, agriculture, tourism, electricity producers, iwi, and every urban and rural community."

The Government today released the final report of the Land and Water Forum that has been looking at water industry issues since 2009.

The Forum has recommended the establishment of a Water Commission as part of a comprehensive package of reform measures.

"We strongly support the establishment of the Commission without further delay. Water is New Zealand's most important resource and gives this country a comparative advantage over many other economies," noted Mr Selwood.

"However, to achieve the full benefits of our water resource, a centralised management system with a clear mandate to co-ordinate water infrastructure development and upgrading across both the rural and urban sectors is critical."

Many urban water authorities are facing huge capital investment to address ageing infrastructure and meet growth, while there is also a growing need to improve storage capability to meet dry year events and better manage opportunities for expanding agriculture through modern irrigation.

Enabling opportunities to meet the power development needs of our cities is also part of the water industry picture that we also intend to keep close watch on, concluded Mr Selwood.

- **For more information contact Stephen Selwood on 021 791 209**