



MEDIA RELEASE

Thursday 19, November 2015 – embargoed until 1pm

Water New Zealand calls for central government direction in wake of sea level rise report

Water New Zealand echoes the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment's view it is time for a major review of how New Zealand is preparing for sea level rise.

"A more strategic approach is required at a national level to recognise the risk of sea level rise and lead a discussion on the most appropriate manner to address the vulnerability of coastal communities and the associated infrastructure, says Water New Zealand CEO, John Pfahlert.

The call comes in light of a report out today (Thursday 19 November 2015) by the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment, Dr Jan Wright on sea level rise – [‘Preparing New Zealand for rising seas: Certainty and Uncertainty’](#).

"The science is established. Sea levels are rising and we must have a co-ordinated, strategic and central approach to address the issues that come with this developing challenge.

"Many New Zealanders live in the proximity of coastal areas and this means infrastructure, in particular stormwater and wastewater discharge points risk inundation by rising sea levels and the associated storm surges. Funding to address the resilience of coastal communities and their attendant infrastructure is in time likely to become a major issue in this country.

"We, along with Local Government New Zealand, have already called on central government to provide greater direction, rather than leaving local councils to make decisions in an area which remains uncertain. Now the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment has added her voice to the call. Central government must step up," Mr Pfahlert says.

The report out today outlines eight recommendations focused on improving the direction and advice for councils. Seven are directed to the Minister for the Environment and the Minister of Conservation. The eighth recommendation is to the Minister of Finance and is focused on the economic and fiscal implications to New Zealand of sea level rise.

"Central government direction in this area is essential. The report released today shows in some detail which areas of the coastline around the country are most vulnerable to sea level rise and assess the risk to infrastructure in those areas. The time has come for co-ordination and action," Mr Pfahlert says.

Contact

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Water New Zealand

Water New Zealand is an independent not for profit association of approximately 1500 water professionals and organisations, focusing on the sustainable management and development of the water environment. It provides leadership in the water sector, through advocacy, provision of technical advice and professional development. It is the principal voice for the water sector.

Its nationwide network of members represent many disciplines; physical and social sciences, public health, engineering, law and management. Water New Zealand attracts decision makers and technologists from central and local government, industry, the academic and research communities, consultants and service/equipment supply organisations, who exchange information about water and wastes issues.

[Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment, Media Release – Prepare for rising seas, warns Environment Commissioner](#)