

## NZPI MEDIA RELEASE

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### NZPI urges Government to consider planning principles in freshwater reforms

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The New Zealand Planning Institute (NZPI) is urging the Government to consider a suite of NZPI-developed guiding principles on freshwater quality issues when it implements its upcoming freshwater reforms.

The NZPI has released a 'Freshwater Quality' position paper, as the Government prepares to implement a range of freshwater reforms.

NZPI Board Member Robert Schofield says the NZPI has an important role working with the Government to help ensure that any legislative amendments and other changes align with, and do not undermine, high quality planning practice.

"As the position paper points out there is no 'one size fits all' solution for freshwater issues," Mr Schofield says.

The paper acknowledges that national standards, policy statements, or guidance are appropriate to ensure consistency on some matters and to address matters of national importance, but it also argues that local and regional matters are more appropriately managed within a local context where a unique approach may achieve the best outcome.

Mr Schofield says the NZPI considers the biggest problem in promoting freshwater quality is the lack of integration between the need for land use and development and the need to manage discharges into our freshwater systems.

"It's about a balanced approach to freshwater management. It is important to manage land use and development that affect water quality so that economic opportunities can be pursued, while also ensuring that activities are managed to meet agreed water quality outcomes."

Other critical issues the paper identifies are the lack of long term political commitment and the need to reach across the board understanding of the causes of freshwater quality issues and focus on these.

“It’s no secret that freshwater quality continues to decline most rapidly in urban areas subject to intensive land use as well as in pastoral farming areas. However, gaining broad acceptance for water quality objectives to improve water quality in specific catchments is a major challenge.”

The position paper emphasises that clean water is integral to our economy, human health, ecosystem health, culture and identity. It also highlights that in 2012 the Ministry for the Environment graded 45% of monitored freshwater recreational beaches as either poor or very poor. Other threats to the country’s water quality include ammonia from animal urine and high bacteria levels in some supplied drinking water.

The NZPI advocates the use of appropriate tools and a community based approach, underpinned by guiding principles for freshwater management:

- Integration - Manage freshwater quality in an integrated way that considers the interaction between land use, development, water flows and allocations, groundwater, surface water, sediment and estuarine and coastal environment
- Agreed understanding - Focus on getting the community and affected parties to agree on an understanding of the uses, values and issues for water resource management
- Governance at appropriate levels - Recognising the need for national standards but acknowledging that local situations may require unique local solutions
- Setting water quality objectives - Includes setting values, objectives and limits for water quality that should, as a minimum, safeguard human health and the life-supporting capacity and ecosystem health of water bodies
- Freshwater quality management options and planning framework - includes focussing on the causes of freshwater quality issues and the effectiveness of potential actions when determining management options

Mr Schofield says NZPI members are involved at every step of planning processes in New Zealand. This includes collaboration with many other professions, organisations and groups in the preparation and administration of water quality planning.

“With their comprehensive understanding of New Zealand’s unique character, professional planners are well placed to make a valuable contribution to addressing this country’s broad range of water quality issues,” he says.

The NZPI ‘Freshwater Quality’ position paper is available online [here](#).

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### **New Zealand Planning Institute (NZPI)**

The NZPI is the voice of planning in New Zealand. It is the professional organisation representing this country’s planners, resource managers, urban designers, and environmental practitioners. Planners have a critical role in shaping New Zealand’s future by helping to develop solutions to key issues, such as population growth, infrastructure needs, pressure on natural resources and environments, demographic change and transport. For more information visit [www.planning.org.nz](http://www.planning.org.nz).

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