



*Irrigation for a thriving and sustainable New Zealand*

## **SUBMISSION**

### ***Valuing Highly Productive Land***

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*Date:* 10 October 2019  
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A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "E Soal", written over a horizontal line.

**Elizabeth Soal, Chief Executive Officer, Irrigation New Zealand**

## About Irrigation New Zealand

1. Irrigation New Zealand (INZ) represents over 3,500 irrigator members nationally, including irrigation schemes and individual irrigators. Our members include a wide range of farmers/growers – dairy and cropping farmers, horticulturalists, winegrowers. We also represent over 120 irrigation service industries – manufacturers, distributors, irrigation design and install companies, and irrigation decision support services.
2. As an organisation we actively promote best practice irrigation and carry out a range of training and education activities. Over the last five years we have trained over 3,000 irrigators on different aspects of irrigation best practice to improve water use efficiency and better manage environmental effects.
3. INZ members share many of the same goals as other New Zealanders:
  - to reduce their environmental footprints and see improvements in the health of our waterways
  - to contribute to the wellbeing of their communities
  - to provide for a sustainable future for New Zealand.

## Submission

Irrigation New Zealand (INZ) is supportive of the government recognising the need to protect highly productive land, for the reasons set out in the Discussion Document.

As the Discussion Document states, one important factor which allows land to reach its productive potential is access to water.

Access to water is crucial as high value permanent horticulture requires water on an 'as and when basis' throughout the growing season to ensure crop quality, thus maintaining market access. With poor water security and reliability of supply, the number of high value horticultural units would be reduced. This would create significant flow-on impacts to the regions of New Zealand where horticulture contributes significantly to community wellbeing.

The importance of access to water for production (and other values, including ecological requirements, cultural values, and community supplies) is going to become even more important under climate change. The impacts of climate change for our regions include -

- significant changes to annual rainfall patterns,
- more variability in river flows,
- increased evaporation,
- increased frequency and severity of drought, and
- increased frequency of major storm and flood events.

Ex-post irrigation development studies, such as that undertaken in Kerikeri, show that for every 1,000ha of irrigated horticulture over 500 jobs are created both on-farm and in the associated food and beverage industries – packhouses, food processing plants and wine making facilities.

In order to ensure we can maintain and improve our national production of food and crops, it is important for there to be alignment across and between different policy sectors, functional areas, and administrative areas.

INZ would urge the government to consider developing an overarching water strategy that aligns policy work programmes – such as highly productive land and soils, climate change, freshwater quality, freshwater allocation, and climate change adaptation.

Whilst the proposed National Policy Statement on Highly Productive Land may recognise the need to maintain and increase our horticultural output from such land (of which access to water is a key component), short-and medium-term development opportunities in such areas are likely to be prevented due to new policies being developed under the Action for Health Waterways package also currently being consulted on.

We share the concerns stated by Horticulture New Zealand that there appears to be conflicting aims and ends between the restrictions on irrigation development and land-use change under the proposed National Environment Standards for freshwater and National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management, and enabling access to water to ensure best use and management of our highly productive land.

INZ is concerned that fragmented freshwater policy development across a number of portfolios could result in opportunities being missed that would otherwise support community resilience and wellbeing in an uncertain climate future.

### Specific submission points

Irrigation New Zealand has read the submission made by Horticulture New Zealand and SUPPORTS its submission points on each of the proposed objectives and policies.