

## 14. FURTHER SUBMISSIONS ON VARIATION 4 TO THE PROPOSED NATURAL RESOURCES REGIONAL PLAN

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### PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to seek adoption by the Council of further submissions (Attachment 1) on Variation 4 to the Proposed Natural Resources Regional Plan (PNRRP). The closing date for further submissions is 14 November 2007.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. Environment Canterbury notified Variation 4 to the PNRRP on Saturday 23 June 2007. This variation affects PNRRP Chapter 5: Water Quantity and sets allocation limits for groundwater zones across Canterbury. The Council submitted on Variation 4 in August this year. A summary of decisions requested by all submitters was notified on 13 October 2007. Further submissions, in support or opposition, can be made until 14 November 2007.
3. The Council's original submissions included:
  - support for proposals to better provide for community drinking water supplies;
  - opposition to a change in the approach for setting allocation blocks, and to including the stream depletion effect in a surface water allocation block when it is also included in the groundwater allocation block; and
  - requests concerning the setting of restrictions and reviewing of water permits, in particular, that these provisions should only apply once the plan becomes operative.
4. The main impact of the Variation is to change the total amount of water that can be abstracted (the allocation limit) for a number of groundwater zones throughout the region. The key implication for Christchurch is that it will be difficult to access water from the Selwyn-Waimakariri Zone should the city require an additional source of water in the future.
5. At this stage no allocation limit has yet been set for the Christchurch Zone, which is the source of the city's community drinking water supply. Setting of this allocation limit is scheduled for 2009/10. In the absence of an allocation limit, the taking of water is a non-complying activity. The Council's submission included a request to change the level of activity from non-complying to restricted discretionary, when the taking of water from a zone for which no allocation limit has been set is for the purpose of group- or community drinking water supply.
6. The Variation attracted submissions from 110 submitters. These included significant opposition to provisions concerning a review of resource consents and the imposition of restrictions on water use. A number of submitters preferred the provisions included in the pre-Variation version and retention of interim allocation limits. In addition, some submitters believed the volumes per annum set in Schedule WQN4 for different allocation zones were too restrictive and that, rather than imposing fixed limits, an adaptive management approach should be employed.
7. A number of community water suppliers (predominantly TLA's) submitted on the Variation seeking a less restrictive regime for community water supplies. These submissions generally complement the CCC submissions and should be supported. In addition, Christchurch International Airport Ltd (CIAL) requested that exemptions for community drinking water supplies throughout Variation 4 should also apply to essential infrastructure such as Christchurch International Airport and that the process for setting allocation limits for groundwater zones should be inclusive of stakeholders and independent experts. This is also supported, along with a submission in support of the amended (simplified) definition for "Intermittently flowing river". A table setting out the proposed further submissions is included in Attachment 1.

#### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

8. While there is no guarantee that the further submissions will be accepted, if successful the amendments sought would reduce administration and management costs for the city's municipal water supply.

#### **Do the Recommendations of this Report Align with 2006-16 LTCCP budgets?**

9. The cost of preparing and presenting submissions is covered by existing unit budgets.

#### **LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS**

10. The RMA 1991 (First Schedule, Part 1 (6)) allows the Council to make further submissions on a variation to a regional plan.

#### **Have you considered the legal implications of the issue under consideration?**

11. Preparation of the proposed further submissions has included a legal review.

#### **ALIGNMENT WITH LTCCP AND ACTIVITY MANAGEMENT PLANS**

12. The further submissions are consistent with the water supply objective of the LTCCP (p.166): "To conserve and protect the long-term availability and quality of the city's water."

#### **Do the recommendations of this report support a level of service or project in the 2006-16 LTCCP?**

13. The submission aims to assist the Council in meeting demand for water supply at a reasonable cost and supports the levels of service for water supply set out on page 167 of the LTCCP.

#### **ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIES**

14. This submission supports work being done in preparation of a draft Water Supply Strategy.

#### **Do the recommendations align with the Council's strategies?**

15. As above.

#### **CONSULTATION FULFILMENT**

16. Not applicable.

#### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Council adopt the attached further submissions on Variation 4 to the PNRRP Chapter 5: Water Quantity.