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Corporate Plan Output: Draft Annual Plan 1999/00	

The purpose of this report is to seek Council approval to proceed immediately with an initial scoping study on Central Plains irrigation.

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

During the Annual Plan preparation process Councillors have discussed a range of initiatives that have the potential to significantly impact employment in the Canterbury region. Among the options, expansion of irrigation on the plains, in particular the Central Plains lying between the Waimakariri and Rakaia rivers, has received favourable support and \$150,000 has been provided in the Draft Annual Plan to help fund feasibility studies on this proposal.

Concurrently, the Selwyn District Council has budgeted \$125,000 in its Draft Plan for the same purpose and it has been accepted that, given positive outcomes from each Annual Plan process, the project will be advanced as a joint initiative and including other key stakeholders.

Councillors will be aware that at the same time, Central Government has signaled a budget announcement of a \$2M fund to be used to assist irrigation feasibility studies.

#### 2. OFFICER DISCUSSIONS

City Council officers have been in discussion with Selwyn District counterparts, including input from government and private specialists and have begun to scope the work that will be required and the type of management structures that could be suggested to a joint committee. These discussions have acknowledged the extensive work that has already been done over a period of 20 years on irrigation options for the Central Plains area and it was agreed that an essential initial step would be to complete a scoping study that would review all previous work, comment on its applicability to the current environment and highlight the significant issues and options confronting planners today. This initial study would

- serve in a single document to bring all interested parties up to speed on the work already done, the current significant technical, social, environmental and economic issues and the new work required to address them
- provide the basis of a brief for detailed feasibility studies
- provide an early signal to Central Government on the intention to carry out feasibility work and seek funding support

### 3. TIMING AND COSTS

A report is going to the 12 May meeting of the Selwyn District Council seeking approval to proceed with this initial study. There is significant pressure on Selwyn officers to move the project along and the result of their request will be known for this meeting of Strategy and Resources. The Selwyn report states that approval is concurrently being sought from the City Council.

The intention is that the report be completed over a two-month period and be available at the time the Annual Plans are confirmed in late July.

Estimates indicate a cost for the study of between \$30,000 and \$40,000 and it is hoped that the costs can be shared equally by the councils, anticipating their future joint work. This share could be funded in the 1998/99 financial year from anticipated under-expenditure in the Water Services Unit budget.

### 4. NATURE OF STUDY

A draft terms of reference is attached detailing the scope of work to be undertaken and the timetable for draft and final report presentation. Proposals would be requested from a selection of consulting firms known to have expertise in this area (approximately five).

### 5. SUMMARY

A scoping study that reviews all previous work, identifies the current significant technical, social, environmental and economic issues and options and sets out the work required to address them is seen as an essential first step for investigating Central Plains irrigation. Advantages are seen in progressing this initial study immediately and having the results available at about the time of the Annual Plan approval (late July). The share of \$15-\$20,000 can be met from the 1998/99 Water Services budget.

- Recommendation:**
1. That approval be given to seek proposals for completion of an initial scoping study on Canterbury Plains irrigation as set out in the attached terms of reference.
  2. That selection of a favoured proposal be left to a joint decision of City Council and Selwyn District Council officers.
  3. That funding of up to \$20,000 be made available from the 1998/99 Water Services Unit budget.

The Chairman comments:

Proceeding with this relatively modest study should provide better quality information for the Council to later determine whether to invest in a larger scale feasibility study. It is important to recognise that it does not represent a commitment to the project as such.

**Chairman's**

**Recommendation:** That the above recommendation be adopted.