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Foreword

Welcome to the 2008 Canterbury Regional Environment Report - informing decision makers and the community.

The Canterbury region comprises 42,200 square kilometres of some of the most diverse land and water resources in New Zealand. Add to that our 800 kilometres of coastline, ever-changing weather, natural processes of environmental change, and the patterns of human development and land use across the Canterbury landscape, and you have a rich and complex natural resource system.

This report helps to explain that complexity by informing readers of the nature of our resources, what we have, how we interact with the natural environment, and the changes that have occurred or are taking place as a result of those interactions. With the increasing pressure on our resources, particularly water and land, we are in a position where we can no longer assume that what we have always done is enough. It is now critical that we examine the trends in environmental information so that the relevant agencies and individuals involved can understand the impact of their actions and ensure that, where necessary, the right interventions are adopted. An important part of this report is to provide information about the ways in which Environment Canterbury is managing the region's resources to get the outcomes that the community wants.

This year we are using a new format for our environmental reporting, which is explained at the start of the report. It uses "sustainability" terminology, intended to provide a more integrated way of analysing the state of Canterbury's environment, the processes that impact on it, and the management responses.

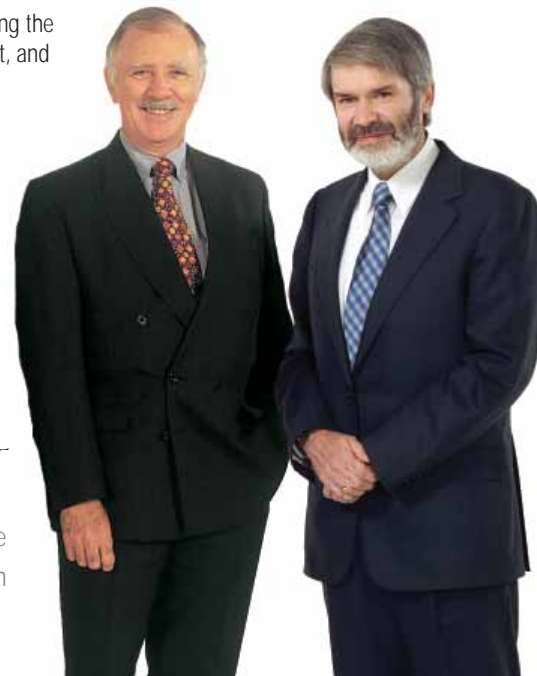
You will see that the report is subtitled "informing decision makers and the community". This is, in part, because we want your feedback on the document, particularly given the new format. In one sense it is a draft or living document; we will be looking to improve and develop the approach taken in subsequent environment reports, and we urge your input to this. At the same time, the information in this report will be a critical contribution to other Environment Canterbury consultation processes.

It is no coincidence that the Regional Environment Report is being published in the same year that Environment Canterbury and other local authorities are preparing their Long-Term Council Community Plans, which are their proposed work programmes from July 2009 to June 2019. We intend this report to help inform debate about where Environment Canterbury should be putting its efforts over the next ten years.

We invite you to read the report, reflect on the nature and state of our resources and our relationship with them, and participate in the discussions about how we all move forward in the management of Canterbury's precious environment.



Hon. Sir Kerry Burke
Chairman



Dr Bryan Jenkins
Chief Executive