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Subject: Ecan Submission Aug 2019 Proposed Plan Change 7 (but also relevant to Plan Change 2)
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Ecan Submission Aug 2019
Proposed Plan Change 7 (but also relevant to Plan Change 2)

Nitrates and the future of pure water in Canterbury

A couple of weeks ago we received an Ecan notification of proposed changes to water management plans within the Canterbury and Waimakariri Zones.

Though there are many issues addressed in the proposed changes in the 'Land and Regional Plan', I would like to focus specifically on the lack of action within this plan on the Nitrate pollution of the Canterbury plains and subsequently Christchurch and other eastern towns and cities on Pegasus bay and further south.

Nitrates are continuing to enter the aquifers of the Canterbury plains at increased levels. This unsustainable amount of pollution is deeply troubling for all people who rely on drinking the clean healthy water from the aquifers which run under the Canterbury Plains. We all rely on ECan to protect and effectively manage this amazing finite resource we are privileged to have.

We are not all hydrologists or marine scientists, but we do enjoy drinking pure water, and as a consequence a lot of people would like to know more about the state of the water we are drinking now and what's going to be like in the future. The lack of clear detail in this notification brochure compared to the amount of space devoted to legal responsibilities of ECan is very surprising and to be honest seems very calculated. Nowhere can I see any reference to safe nitrate levels in New Zealand, worldwide standards and or trends for the region. Is this something ECan would not like to discuss with the people of Christchurch, it seems so.

International studies have proven a clear link to colorectal cancers and other significant illnesses with increased rates of nitrates in drinking water. 0.87ppm of Nitrate is the limit a lot of European countries have. Christchurch is now experiencing well over 2.1ppm in 30% of drinking supplies, this is at a proven rate to increase the chances of colorectal cancers by 20%, but ECan already knows this, and now a lot of people in Christchurch know it too. We also are very aware ECan has decided to ignore the European experience and history, just to keep the milk pumping and the irrigators sucking.

Dairy farming is not all bad, I myself haven't made the switch to Almond Juice (wink wink) in my latte. The problem is its current intensity and focus on milk volume, with little diversity of farming practice. The aquifers and streams don't stand a chance and are being polluted for many generations to come.

Property on the plains is now valued by the amount of water that can be extracted out of the ground and the amount of pollutants (nitrogen) able to be put back into the system. For ECan to have allowed this property valuation system to occur shows it has absolutely failed to act within the laws of the RMA.

RMA section 30 specifically but not limited to -

(c) the control of the use of the land for the purpose of;

[ii] the maintenance and enhancement of the quality of water bodies and coastal water.

[iii] the maintenance of the quantity of water in water bodies and coastal water.

After a decade of ignoring law and putting profit over people's health, the effects are beginning to be shown in the drinking water of homes around Christchurch. With the increase in nitrates in the water (as above 30% of sample taken measured well over 2.1ppm) there will be and already is a health cost, the question is, is the cost to health worth the profit from milk and pollution? Based on present day losses to Fonterra and essentially insolvency of Westland Milk Products the answer must be NO.

It's time for ECan and urban authorities to put the citizens' health and well-being before profits. We must strive to leave our resources in a better state than when we became the temporary custodians of them. The level of Nitrates acceptable to be put into the water, the land and the aquifers should be as close to the natural level as possible prior to exploitation. The 3.8mg/l level ECan is currently suggesting as an UNACCEPTABLE level of nitrate entering the aquifer system and is 5 times the safe level of The Netherlands and other European countries which have been through the Dairy Boom Bust cycle.

Please recognise the international study on the levels and effects of Nitrates, and put people before profits.

Its very clear that this current Dairy boom is based on free water and cheap artificial Nitrogen nutrients, and its not sustainable. We need to help farmers to diversify, the first step is for everyone to face facts.

Yours Sincerely
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