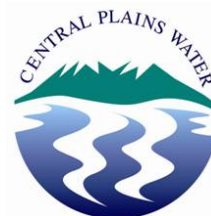


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For immediate release



## **CPW SCHEME NO THREAT TO CHRISTCHURCH DRINKING WATER SUPPLY**

The Central Plains Water (CPW) Trust today reassured Christchurch City Councillors that the scheme will not affect Christchurch's supply of pristine drinking water.

A notice of motion that the Council withdraw all support for the scheme was amended to allow discussion with Selwyn District Council as co-settlor of the Trust.

Today's discussions were prompted by a media release issued by Councillor Helen Broughton earlier in the week that stated incorrectly that the Central Plains Water (CPW) irrigation project could "introduce contaminants to Christchurch's high quality drinking water supply in Halswell, Templeton and West Melton".

Drinking water for both the Halswell and Templeton townships is derived from the main Christchurch City water supply. This water is sourced from Christchurch's confined, deep aquifer system that lies outside the scheme area and will not be affected by CPW scheme.

CPW Trust Chairman, Doug Marsh, says the Trust is pleased that the Council, together with Selwyn District Council, remains one of the two Settlers of the Trust Deed. The Deed seeks to improve the security and prosperity of Central Canterbury via a water enhancement scheme that provides increased agricultural and horticultural diversity, while enhancing ecological and recreational resources.

"We are very aware of where the City is coming from in terms of protecting its groundwater supply of drinking water, so I am pleased that the Council remains committed to ongoing dialogue."

He said CPW's resource consent application is a complex technical document that can easily be misinterpreted by lay audiences. "I suspect the confusion has arisen because Cr Broughton has failed to understand the distinction between shallow and deep aquifers." Shallow bores are sometimes used by individual landowners to source their drinking water, and if these became contaminated as a result of the scheme (rather than existing factors such as old septic tanks, factory farming or some form of processing activity), CPW has stated in its application that it will work with landowners to source an alternative drinking water supply from a deeper aquifer.

Looking specifically at the level of nitrate-nitrogen contamination of shallow bores that may result from the CPW scheme, Doug Marsh said CPW's modelling studies indicate the scheme will not contravene New Zealand's drinking water standard maximum allowable value of 11.3mg/l (milligrams per litre). The modelling estimates the average groundwater concentration of nitrate-nitrogen will be 6.8mg/l once the

scheme is fully up and running. This compares with the current pre-scheme average of 4.3mg/l.

CPW anticipates the scheme's resource consent applications will be heard later this year or early in 2007. "The hearing process is extremely robust," says Doug Marsh, "and if the independent expert commissioners have any doubt about potential contamination of Christchurch's drinking water supply, the scheme will have strict conditions on its consents."

With regards to Christchurch City Councillors' concerns that the CPW Trust failed to approve CPW's Assessment of Environmental Effects (AEE) application prior to lodgement with Environment Canterbury, Doug Marsh says the Trust has always been mindful of its obligations and responsibilities to Council and has tried hard to ensure effective communications.

"However it was never communicated to the CPW Trust that it had to seek Council approval before lodging the AEE with Environment Canterbury. This requirement was communicated to the original Steering Committee that was set up in May 2000 but was lost in the transfer of the roles from the steering committee to the formation of the CPW Trust in April 2003.

"The Trust Deed was signed off by Council and it did not contain any requirement for Council to approve the AEE. We have always acted with the best interests of the Council and on several occasions have sought to brief them on the scheme's progress. In February 2006, councillors were among a group of more than 500 people who were each sent a 28 page briefing paper that outlined the scheme in detail, highlighting its community, recreational and economic benefits.

"In addition, part of our Trust Deed involves the Christchurch City Councillors receiving and approving our Annual Report, a six monthly report and our yearly Statement of Intent. We also provide the Christchurch City Council with a quarterly report on the progress of the scheme. To date the Council has not sought clarification on any of the information provided," said Doug Marsh.

"We plan to work with the Council to ensure that any reasonable needs and concerns are taken into consideration."

#ENDS

For more information please contact:

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