

Media Release

On Behalf of the Canterbury Mayoral Forum
10 March 2008

Public Engagement Programme for Water Management Announced

The Canterbury region Mayoral Forum has announced a proposal for a comprehensive public engagement programme with the Canterbury public over future directions for the region's water management. This announcement accompanies the completion and release of a long-running technical assessment of water availability and storage options in Canterbury.

“Water management is almost certainly the biggest long-term issue facing the Canterbury region. Water plays a massive part in Canterbury's way of life – from household consumption to recreation to economic development – but it is not an infinite resource,” says Bede O'Malley, chairman of the Steering Committee (appointed by the Mayoral Forum) which has overseen this assessment.

“We need to make decisions about how, as a region, we manage our future water resources and it is essential the public and stakeholder groups have an opportunity to influence those decisions.

“We expect public debate to be strong. The question of water management is characterised by diverse opinions and interests. Recreationalists, farmers, environmentalists - and most people in between - have a view.

“We don't expect any decisions to be easy, and we don't expect everybody to be happy with all aspects of the outcome. But, we do expect the people of Canterbury to have had the opportunity to shape those decisions,” says Mr O'Malley.

Details of the information and engagement programme will be worked through in discussion with key stakeholder groups during the next few weeks and outlined to the public next month. It is expected the programme will take some 12-18 months and extend through into 2009.

Meanwhile, the Mayoral Forum has released a completed report into Canterbury's water storage options, *The Canterbury Strategic Water Study: Stage 3*. This report brings together extensive research and technical analysis, as well as some stakeholder discussion. The work was undertaken by consultants, reporting to a Steering Group appointed by the Mayoral Forum.

“This report is a valuable contribution to our understanding of Canterbury's water storage challenges. It throws up a host of possible storage options – various diversion and damming options across the different sub-regions and rivers of Canterbury. It contains a lot of valuable research and technical information.

“As a region, however, we need a lot more information and debate before deciding which, if any, of these storage options fit our community’s aspirations. There are other critical issues, the likes of water quality and recreational water use, which have not yet been adequately evaluated. They have to be, and that is why we will be undertaking a comprehensive consultation programme on Canterbury’s future water management approach over the next 18 months,” says Mr O’Malley.

For further information:

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