



Cabinet Business Committee

Minute of Decision

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Improving the Process for Reclassification of Conservation Portfolio Stewardship Land

Portfolio **Conservation**

On 19 April 2021, the Cabinet Business Committee:

- 1 **agreed in principle**, subject to the report back in paragraph 11 below, that the Conservation Act 1987 be amended to improve the process of reclassifying conservation portfolio stewardship land;
- 2 **noted** that the guiding principle of an improved stewardship land reclassification process will be to undertake genuine technical assessments of conservation values;
- 3 **agreed** that two independent expert national panels be established to make recommendations to the Minister of Conservation on the reclassification of stewardship land, with their work beginning in the Northern South Island and Western South Island regions;
- 4 **agreed** that the Minister of Conservation can direct the expert panels to focus on new geographic areas for assessment once they have completed reclassification of stewardship land in the Northern South Island and Western South Island regions;
- 5 **agreed** to the draft Terms of Reference for the expert panels, attached as Appendix 2 to the submission under CBC-21-MIN-0045;
- 6 **noted** that the Minister of Conservation intends to appoint:
 - 6.1 Hon Christopher FINLAYSON and Hon Philip WOOLLASTON as co-chairs of Panel One, initially focussed on the Northern South Island region;
 - 6.2 Mr William SHAW, Ms Nicky DOUGLAS, Ms Laura Coll MCLAUGHLIN; Mr Geoff CANHAM, Ms Mary O'KEEFE and Hon Mita RIRINUI as members of Panel One;
- 7 **noted** that the Minister of Conservation intends to appoint:
 - 7.1 Dr Jan WRIGHT as the Chair of Panel Two, initially focussed on the Western South Island region;
 - 7.2 Dr William (Bill) LEE, Dr Les MOLLOY, Ms Jo BREESE, Ms Katharine WATSON, Mr Philip BLAKELY, and Dr Marama MURU-LANNING as members of Panel Two;

- 8 **noted** that the Minister of Conservation intends to appoint the expert panels for a period of up to two years, to be reviewed thereafter, with their work programme likely to expand to consider other regions within that timeframe;
- 9 **noted** that the expert panels may assist in decision making in relation to mining applications on stewardship land by prioritising reclassification recommendations for land where a mining access arrangement application is received - at a yet to be determined additional cost to the applicant;
- 10 **noted** that proposed amendments to the Conservation Act 1987 will include that the Minister of Conservation can make binding decisions based on the recommendations of expert panels;
- 11 **invited** the Minister of Conservation to report back to the appropriate Cabinet Committee by 31 August 2021 with detailed analysis concerning amendments to the Conservation Act 1987 and related legislation to improve the process of reclassifying conservation portfolio stewardship land;
- 12 **noted** that the Minister of Conservation's current preference is to consider the exchange of stewardship land and recognition of Māori cultural values in land classifications within the context of broader conservation system reform to be undertaken by the Department of Conservation, however the Minister of Conservation will include an analysis of these issues in the report back in paragraph 11 above.

Rachel Clarke
Committee Secretary

Present:

Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern (Chair)
Hon Grant Robertson
Hon Kelvin Davis
Hon Dr Megan Woods
Hon Chris Hipkins
Hon Carmel Sepuloni
Hon David Parker
Hon Nanaia Mahuta
Hon Damien O'Connor
Hon Stuart Nash
Hon Dr Ayesha Verrall

Officials present from:

Office of the Prime Minister
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet