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For immediate release



Central Plains Water Limited scheme still viable

“The decision handed down last night by the High Court giving Synlait priority to water from the Rakaia River does not mean the proposed Central Plains Water scheme is no longer viable. It is business as usual,” says Pat Morrison, Chairman of Central Plains Water Limited.

Pat Morrison noted that the decision from the High Court is some what of a hollow victory for Synlait. The decision denied Synlait access to the valuable and reliable Rakaia water in bands two and three. The water Synlait has been awarded priority to is unreliable and without storage.

“However on the critical issue of priority we are still awaiting the outcome of the Court of Appeal's decision on Ngai Tahu's challenge to our priority. That decision will determine whether the High Court's decision has proceeded on an erroneous understanding of the law on priority. If the Ngai Tahu challenge goes in our favour it will undo the High Court's decision on Synlait”

The proposed Central Plains Water scheme represents the last chance in Canterbury for the community to not only secure the rights to the use of water for irrigation, but also to generate significant economic, recreational and environment benefits that can flow from such a community owned scheme. This is due to Central Plains Water's consents being entirely community-owned through the Central Plains Water Trust that was established by the Christchurch City and Selwyn District Councils. The High Court decision sought by Synlait demonstrates the threat to the Canterbury community of losing once and for all, the control of Canterbury waters to overseas owned corporate interests.

“The wider benefits to the Canterbury community include the obvious regional economic flow on effects (2,700 new jobs and an estimated \$350 million contribution to GDP each year), a range of environmental enhancements, and comprehensive recreational amenities on the lake and waterways that Central Plains Water plans to construct. Due to the size of the scheme, Central Plains Water must also satisfy much higher environmental standards than any other applicant currently seeking water consents in New Zealand.

“If Central Plains is not successful the remaining water will fall into corporate owned farming schemes. Neither Ngai Tahu nor Synlait can provide hundreds of farmers with an alternative to continuing to deplete our aquifers, to restore flows in our region's lowland streams or control nitrate contamination in groundwater,” says Pat Morrison.

For further information

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