

June 30, 2009

## **MEDIA STATEMENT**

### **Let's change our ways to change our waterways**

Environment Canterbury and the Christchurch City Council have today launched a public awareness campaign to help make Christchurch's waterways healthier.

'Let's change our ways to change our waterways' is a two month campaign to raise public awareness around the role the community can play in making the city's rivers and streams healthier.

Environment Canterbury Chairman, Sir Kerry Burke, says the focus of the campaign is to give people ideas about what they can do to help.

"Research tells us people want to be involved, they value clean streams and rivers and want to take actions to improve the health of Christchurch's urban waterways," Sir Kerry says.

"Simple actions like washing your car on the grass, not the driveway, or picking up your litter and dog droppings all have a positive impact. What we do in our backyard certainly impacts upon the health of Christchurch waterways," he said.

Environment Canterbury and Christchurch City Council's combined approach is a win-win for everyone says Mayor of Christchurch Bob Parker.

As responsible environmental guardians, the two organisations are mandated to protect Christchurch urban waterways, Mr Parker says.

Last year Mr Parker asked the Council's staff to look at the possibility of reinstating the River Guardians scheme, and after considering the staff recommendations he and the staff believed that working with Environment Canterbury on the public awareness campaign would have a better outcome for the community.

"Given the priority we are putting on improving the health of our urban waterways it is extremely timely that we are embarking on this public awareness campaign together to improve the quality of our waterways," Mr Parker says.

"All the stormwater from Christchurch City's roofs, roads, driveways and parks flows down drains into our stormwater network, which consists of a series of underground pipes and open waterways, and into our streams.

"This water eventually flows into one of our City's rivers, the Avon, Heathcote, Halswell and Styx Rivers, and eventually out to sea. Apart from new greenfield subdivisions, and some new urban detention basins and swales, the stormwater mainly doesn't get treated at any point on its way to the rivers, so whatever goes down the drain goes into the river," Mr Parker says.

The public awareness campaign is one of three components in relation to urban waterway health.

Sir Kerry Burke says two science investigations are underway to better understand the contaminants in our waterways.

“One investigation is to gain a better understanding around the contaminants in Haytons and Papanui Streams (Hornby/Sockburn area) including the types, concentrations and how contaminants enter waterways,” he said.

“The second investigation is looking at the sources of sediment into Cashmere Stream. This will provide information so we can work towards reducing the amount of sediment entering the stream, which flows into the Heathcote River and ultimately the estuary,” he said.

Christchurch City is undertaking investigations into the effectiveness of new stormwater detention facilities.

The Council has 24 monitoring sites on the waterways catchments network to gauge the health of streams and rivers.

The third component involves pollution prevention, where Sir Kerry says, a team at Environment Canterbury is working with businesses to identify issues.

The campaign, which includes advertising on Christchurch buses, billboards and print media runs from June until August. A website - [www.cleanwaterways.org.nz](http://www.cleanwaterways.org.nz) – outlines actions we can do at home or at work as well as providing information about the programme.

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**Further information:**

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**Sir Kerry Burke, Environment Canterbury Chairman mobile 0275 425 848 (available after July 10).**