

Clean rivers for future generations

Our water is New Zealand's most important natural treasure.

Clean water is the birth-right of all of us, and vital to our continued prosperity. Our rivers and lakes are a taonga of huge significance to Māori, a favourite place of recreation for New Zealanders. Water underpins our agriculture.

Our fresh water resource needs to be protected and restored, and that can only happen if all water users and the Government work together. The Government will assist in this work by employing young people who are stuck on the dole and getting them working on improving the health of waterways.

Everyone owns our water, but some have interests in it that others don't. Large commercial users who profit from our water should pay a fair and affordable royalty – for example, water bottling companies. This revenue can help councils restore our waterways for future generations.

▶ Labour will:

- **Restore our rivers and lakes to a truly swimmable state within a generation**
- **Help farmers and other owners of waterways with fencing and riparian planting through our Ready for Work programme**
- **Give the regional councils the resources to clean up their waterways through a water royalty.**

Labour will set strong nationwide freshwater quality standards, including for pathogens, dissolved oxygen, nutrients, periphyton a.k.a. slime, and macroinvertebrate health. The National Policy Statement will stop water quality getting worse straight away. Water quality will begin improving within five years. Within a generation, we will reverse the damage that has been done to our fresh water, and make our rivers and lakes swimmable.

This will require more sophisticated farming methods that rely less on ever higher stocking levels and are more focused on value-add. Within five years, all intensively stocked land near waterways will need to be fenced with setbacks for riparian planting to filter and absorb silt and nutrients before they can flow into the water.

Labour will help with the workforce for this task through the Ready for Work policy. This programme will employ young people off the dole, and give the opportunity to gain work experience and income while helping to improve the environment. The young people employed through Ready for Work will be able to work on fencing waterways, riparian planting, and other work to improve water quality. Riparian planting will qualify for carbon credits under the Emissions Trading Scheme.

A royalty on the commercial consumption of water will assist with the cost of keeping our water clean. Households and councils will not pay any water royalty.

The royalty will be flexible to reflect the scarcity or abundance of water in different regions, the different quality of water, and its use.

The royalty for bottled water will be based on per litre and the royalty for irrigation water will be based on per 1000 litres. It will be proportionate and fair.

Levels will be set following consultation and the revenue will largely be returned to regional councils.

Labour will work with iwi to resolve Treaty water claims in a manner that respects iwi's mana, and restores the mauri of our rivers and lakes.

Investing in clean water will be good for all users of our water resource, from farmers to families, and ensure it is there for future generations to enjoy.

Let's do this.

