

**ENVIRONMENT 2010 STRATEGY : A SUBMISSION BY  
THE CANTERBURY BOTANICAL SOCIETY ON THE  
STATEMENT OF GOVERNMENT POLICY ON THE  
ENVIRONMENT**

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WITH ADVICE FROM OTHER SOCIETY MEMBERS  
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**Preamble**

The Canterbury Botanical Society has a special interest in and concern for New Zealand's botanical environment, especially the indigenous flora.

**General**

The document is a statement of Government's strategy and it implies that environmental policy is a function of Government and Department officials, with the public to respond to defined policy. We would prefer to see a more democratic decision-making process. Environmental policy should be developed through interactive discussion with the public.

New Zealand's botanical heritage has been much depleted since settlement of these islands by humans. We would wish to see New Zealand's unique botanical environment retained and enhanced as far as practicable. It is part of the heritage of all New Zealanders, irrespective of ethnic origin, and helps to motivate their affinity with the land.

**Issues**

To a considerable degree, the opportunities for retaining the residue of New Zealand's original vegetation stems from a low population density. It is thus very important for New Zealand to develop a population policy to sustain this environment for future generations. Further, the special nature of this environment is attracting increasing numbers of ecotourists. Growth in tourism, although having economic benefits, has dangers for the natural environment and it may degrade or destroy the very thing that tourists come to see and New Zealanders presently enjoy. This growth requires investment in infrastructure and facilities which have the potential to alter New Zealand's special places irrevocably and place sensitive ecological areas at risk. Policies must be put in place to ensure that ecological damage does not happen and appropriate limits to growth set.

Other than designated parks and reserves and areas of Crown land that form part of the conservation estate, very little of New Zealand's indigenous flora remains. Landowners should be encouraged to care for the remaining natural areas on their land and to plant marginal strips,

wayside verges and other small areas in suitable native species, as well as to use indigenous trees for shelter belts wherever possible. More emphasis should be given to private covenant reservations to enhance the quality of the landscape. The Protection of Natural Areas system should be strengthened. Guidelines with legal constraints should be developed for the retention of the remaining natural areas, particularly wetlands, lowland forest and coastal vegetation which have been particularly severely depleted and diminished in extent.

Plantation forestry is currently dominated by the planting of a single species, *Pinus radiata*. There is need to complement this general-purpose timber with hardwoods for high-quality end-uses. There should be a national policy to create and sustain the planting of indigenous hardwood species to provide a long-term timber supply in perpetuity. Landowners should be encouraged to appreciate the value of such long-term investment, but not at the expense of destroying scrublands and other natural areas.

### **Funding**

The Department of Conservation is seriously underfunded for the range of its responsibilities. Unless the Department's budget is significantly increased above 1994/5 levels, the natural environment is likely to be degraded further through economic pressures and the lack of maintenance.

There should be an increased allocation of funds from the Public Good Science Fund for conservation research, with systematic studies on topics such as weed and pest control, land restitution, and the response of the flora to possible climate change.