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Book on Quota Management System lacks credibility
- Media Statement, 29 April 2018

Te Ohu
Kaimoana

**Book on Quota Management
System lacks credibility**

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A proposal publicised by a non-government organisation to overhaul New Zealand’s Quota Management System for managing commercial fisheries could potentially cost the taxpayer hundreds of millions of dollars if taken to its illogical conclusion.

Te Ohu Kaimoana (Māori Fisheries Trust) says the book *Voices from the Sea* by the Environmental Defence Society (EDS) is misguided, confuses the role of the QMS and the Fisheries Act, and lacks credibility to be considered a meaningful report to improve fisheries management in New Zealand.

EDS claims in the book that the Māori Fisheries Settlement concluded more than 25 years ago “created a barrier for fishers and processors who wished to acquire more quota to support their businesses, and potentially for aspiring new entrants” to the industry. It adds that “perhaps more significantly, the settlement has potentially reduced the flexibility to adjust the fisheries management system over time.”

Te Ohu Kaimoana Chief Executive Dion Tuuta says the report is scaremongering, and the Crown can change the QMS in partnership with Māori. “If the QMS is fundamentally changed, it will therefore change the nature of the Māori Fisheries Settlement and the Crown may be forced to renegotiate the deal it reached in 1992, potentially costing the taxpayer hundreds of millions of dollars,” Mr Tuuta said.

To borrow a quote from former Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating, the book by EDS is a shiver looking for a spine to run up.

The QMS divides New Zealand's commercial fisheries into shares for each species of fish. It is a share of the total QMS that Māori received in return for full and final settlement of Treaty of Waitangi claims and to provide certainty to the fisheries management regime. It is the Fisheries Act that determines the Total Allowable Commercial Catch and provides the mechanisms for setting sustainability limits. EDS confuses the two.

When a resource is limited (or scarce), demand often exceeds supply and therefore affects the price of quota.

“Yet again we have another non-government organisation fundamentally misunderstanding the nature of the Māori Fisheries Settlement and the operation of the Quota Management System to the economic and social detriment of iwi organisations.”

“Māori support and have always supported changes to fisheries that take sustainable management forward positively as long as such changes are grounded in objective science and not emotive opinion. Far from being problematic as portrayed by EDS, the Fisheries Settlement confirmed Māori acceptance of the QMS and gave certainty to New Zealand's fisheries management regime.”

On numerous occasions Māori, through Te Ohu Kaimoana, supported reductions in commercial catch to allow fish species, for example such as hoki and orange roughy, to recover. The Māori Fisheries Settlement has never prevented action being taken to ensure fisheries are managed at sustainable levels.

The EDS book purports to have spoken to 60 people involved in the fishing industry, but does not name those who are interviewed, and yet it asks the public to accept the credibility of its conclusions.

“A few years ago, it was the US-based Pew Environment Group and lobbying by its representative in New Zealand to override Māori fishing rights in its attempt to secure a no-take marine protected area in the Kermadec region. The EDS in part is blaming Māori fishing rights as contributing to what it sees as problems with the QMS.”

“Te Ohu Kaimoana does not agree with either the problem definition as expressed by EDS in *Voices from the Sea* nor many of the conclusions that it has reached and considers that it therefore lacks credibility,” Mr Tuuta said.

“Interestingly, the Pew Environment Group helped pay for the publication of the EDS document and the Department of Conservation paid for studies to be done for inclusion in the book as well as contributing to the book's launch, despite that DOC is not responsible for fisheries management decisions in Aotearoa.”

Te Ohu Kaimoana recommends a more balanced view of New Zealand's fisheries management can be found in the recently released report entitled [*Learning from New Zealand's 30 Years of Experience Managing Fisheries under a Quota Management System*](#), by The Nature Conservancy.



“The author of the EDS report was also one of the two New Zealand-based lead authors of the TNC review. But, despite that, she does not even reference the TNC report in either the footnotes or bibliography of her book. Is she now walking away from the TNC review and her work within it? Does she not now accept its conclusions, which are markedly different from what’s in the EDS book?” Mr Tuuta asked.

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