

PM gives Queen's chain assurance

Wellington (PA). — The Prime Minister, Mr Palmer, yesterday gave an assurance the Government had no plans to restrict public access to the Queen's chain.

His assurance followed concern about changes to the chain proposed in the Conservation Law Reform Bill at present before Parliament.

The chain, or marginal strip as it is also known, guarantees free public access to the coast and countryside by preserving in Crown ownership a 20m-wide strip of land alongside lakes, rivers and the coast.

The changes to the chain were intended to simplify the law relating to it but led to concern the

Government planned to give the chain to adjacent land owners.

But Mr Palmer said that was not the intention.

"I want to assure everybody that the Queen's chain is secure," he said.

"The Government isn't going to take it away. It's an important part of New Zealand's history. We want it. We're going to have it. We're going to keep it."

The Prime Minister said the drafting of the Conservation Law Reform Bill had not clearly reflected Government policy.

When the Bill was reported back from the select committee he expected it to be rather different from when it went in.

"The Bill is meant to strengthen

protection of the Queen's chain, not the reverse."

He said it was intended to do this by making it more difficult for the Government not to take a marginal strip, by applying marginal strips to more categories of land and by including conservation and recreation in the purposes for which the strips must be managed.

At present the only requirement for Government to retain a marginal strip was access, Mr Palmer said. The Bill widened this area considerably.

"If the Bill is still ambiguous when it is reported back, then further amendments will be made to clarify the Government's intent to strengthen the protection of the Queen's chain," he said.



Mr Palmer