

Report 99.322

11 June 1999

File: E/6/18/3

[Reports.1999.322.JB:lb]

Report to the Environment Committee
From Dr Jane Bradbury, Divisional Manager, Environment

Divisional Manager's Report

1. Purpose

To inform the Committee about activities of the Environment Division and about any matters that have arisen since the Committee's last meeting.

2. Managers' Reports

The Department Managers' reports and the Divisional Accountant's report are attached.

3. RMA Update

Our latest information is that the Minister will have a bill ready for introduction by the end of this month. Evidently we can expect it to be introduced next month.

4. State of the Environment Report

I'm sorry to report that we are not going to meet the end of June deadline for the report. Given the importance of this document in reporting on our achievements in the environmental area, I am reluctant to sacrifice quality for expedience. Our target date for completion is now September.

5. Consents Database

Staff have been working very hard to get our new consents database up and running. The new database will bring improvements in the way that we manage consents. At the moment we are migrating data from our current

database - a much bigger job than anticipated. I'd like to formally thank Paula Bullock and Romae Duns for all the hard work they are putting in to get us "operational".

6. **Consent Conditions**

We have contracted PricewaterhouseCoopers to carry out an audit of the consent conditions that we impose to assess how "risk averse" we are in this regulatory role. At the time of writing we have received a draft report of their findings. We shall be reporting in full at the next Committee meeting. It should provide some interesting information to counter criticism of local government performance re the RMA such as that articulated recently to the Council by the Business Round Table.

7. **Trees for Survival**

The Council is increasingly recognising the need to communicate its achievements. So I'd like to take this opportunity to mention the work that Nigel Clarke, Resource Policy Department, has been quietly carrying out through the Trees for Survival programme. A total of 8000 trees have been planted through this programme this year. It is an excellent example of what the Council can achieve in the environment in partnership with the community. For Councillors' information, a copy of a recent newsletter to community participants is attached to this report.

8. **Environment Management Systems**

The Environment Division is charged with the responsibility of co-ordinating the development of Environment Management Systems (EMS) in the Council. As a regulatory agency, it is particularly important that our own operations and practices comply with legislative requirements and best practice standards. There is also a move internationally for companies to report on environmental performance in their annual reports. With the development of Environment Management Systems, this Council will be able to do just this.

A preliminary audit of three divisions has already been carried out and we now have a timetable for each department to prepare an EMS. The wholesale water and laboratory operations have been making good progress with this work and are seeking ISO 14001 accreditation by the end of the year.

9. **Environment Education/Communication Strategy**

I have been working to complete this strategy so that it can be considered in the Council's strategic planning process. It will be presented to Council this month.

10. **Emergency Management Group**

The General Manager and I met recently with John Norton, Director of the Office of Emergency Management and Civil Defence, to gain some clarification about the Emergency Management Group concept. There are still important areas of uncertainty, for example, governance and accountability. I have been talking with the Auckland Regional Council who share our views and together we are trying to find an acceptable way forward.

11. **Business Development Quality Awards**

These awards are jointly sponsored by the Ministry of Commerce, the Ministry for the Environment, Air New Zealand and Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu. This year, the Division, and particularly the Consents Management Department, is intending to enter. We will have to prepare a formal 35 page outline on how the business operates and make a presentation, based on strict criteria. The best performers are then checked on-site and called to explain and justify the claims they have made.

Having talked to previous entrants, we know that entering is a time-consuming and resource intensive process - but one worth going through. Evidently the process is extremely beneficial and a valuable management tool.

12. **Tier One Plan**

It is pleasing to note that the Maritime Safety Authority has recommended that this Council's template for a Tier One Oil Pollution Response Plan (Tank Trucks) be adopted by other regional councils. It is always good to get this sort of recognition for our work.

13. **Recommendation**

That the reports from the Divisional Manager, the Departmental Managers and the Divisional Accountant be received.

Report prepared by:

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Attachment