

## **Report 99.118**

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

### **Divisional Manager's Report**

#### **1. Purpose**

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

#### **2. Managers' Reports**

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

#### **3. Update on RMA Amendments**

Ministry for the Environment staff are due to report to the Minister at the end of this week on the analysis of submissions received on the proposals document.

However, it was a bit disconcerting to read the Minister's comments in *Environet* (copy in Councillors' Information Bulletin) that questioned just how representative the submissions are of stakeholder views. Although the Minister denies that this comment is dismissive of submitters' views, he does suggest that official or public views may differ from private or unofficial views.

This may or may not be true. However, the extracts of submissions that the Minister has quoted in *Environet* would suggest that they are from people/organisations working at the coalface of the Act. They see it working in practice on a daily basis. I hope that these views will not be discounted in

favour of satisfying a few lobbyists who have only scant knowledge of the real situation.

Nevertheless, I am mindful that the situation at this Council may not be the same as in other areas of the country. What is clear from the Ministers' comments is that there is agreement on the bulk of issues – but disagreement on the 3 or 4 key issues. These key issues really relate to how the Act is being implemented rather than problems with the Act itself. We highlighted this in our submission and suggested a way of raising the standard of implementation. To date the idea of an audit mechanism (perhaps similar to the Education Review Office) has not been popular with the Minister. However, I am convinced that you cannot fix bad practice through legislative change. It may produce the sticking plaster for a short time – but it won't solve the problem. Perhaps this Council should be lobbying harder for more thought to be put into ways to improve the performance of councils throughout the country – instead of legislative change that could hinder good practice.

For any Councillors that are interested, I shall get copy of Sir Geoffrey Palmer's legal opinion on the constitutional principles applying to the use of Commissioners for hearings that the Minister refers to in the latest edition of *Environet*.

#### 4. **General**

I think most other issues of relevance have been raised in the individual managers' reports. As a management group, we, along with the Wairarapa Division, will be preparing for the next long-term financial strategy by looking at where we think the Council's environment work should be heading in the next three years. Whilst we need to continue in much the same way as present, there are areas which are becoming important nationally, e.g., the disposal of hazardous waste, where we may need to become more active.

#### 5. **Recommendation**

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

Report prepared by:

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