

3. STANDARDS FOR NEW ZEALAND LANDFILLS

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The purpose of this report is to recommend that the Subcommittee prepare a report for Central Government on the need for landfill standards in New Zealand, including reviews of consents for existing sites.

BACKGROUND

Huge differences exist in New Zealand between residual disposal sites. Sites range from at the one end of the scale, old style holes in the ground to fully engineered modern landfills at the other end. There is a need for consenting authorities to regularly review consent conditions for older sites in order to improve environmental performance and to move away from double standards. Substandard sites with low fees could attract waste away from high standard facilities. Legislation providing for sunset clauses for early closure is one option for substandard disposal sites.

As far as consenting new sites are concerned there are guidelines but no national standards, which has the unacceptable result of widely different environmental standards being imposed on new sites by different regional councils. This problem also extends to so-called 'cleanfills'.

DISCUSSION

The current lack of standards for residual disposal is clearly an unacceptable practice and should be addressed by Central Government by changing existing landfill and cleanfill guidelines into standards. In addition there is a need to review circumstances when existing landfilling conditions should be reviewed in order to reflect society's expectations for increased environmental standards.

A report to the Ministers for the Environment and Commerce is therefore proposed in order to advance these issues in a constructive way.

SUMMARY

This report outlines the need to prepare a report to the Ministers for the Environment and Commerce addressing the issues of landfill standards for residual disposal, and to clarify issues around the reviewing of existing consents for older disposal sites.

Staff

- Recommendation:**
1. That a meeting be sought with the Minister for the Environment and the Minister of Commerce together, seeking mandatory minimum landfill standards with a target compliance date for existing landfills; and that Canterbury MPs also be invited to attend.
 2. That a report be prepared for the Subcommittee outlining the law relating to the review of consents for existing landfills, who can initiate such reviews, and any relevant other issues.

Chairman's

- Recommendation:** That the above recommendation be adopted.