

2. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TRAINING FOR RMA DECISION-MAKERS

Officer responsible Director of Legal and Secretariat Services	Author Angelene Holton, Committee Secretary, DDI 941-8437
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The purpose of this report is to seek the Council's approval for the short term establishment of an RMA Accreditation Subcommittee, authorised to make a submission to LGNZ on behalf of the Council on a proposed professional development training for RMA decision-makers.

BACKGROUND

On 14 August 2003 LGNZ wrote to all local authorities seeking feedback on a proposed development training scheme for elected members and independent commissioners who hear resource consent applications. Responses were required by Friday 29 August 2003. Given the tight timeframe the Council has sought and been granted a one week extension for reply.

The proposal for a RMA training scheme has been jointly developed by LGNZ and the Ministry for the Environment (MfE). The aim of the scheme is to ensure that RMA decision-makers across New Zealand exhibit a consistent level of competency and professionalism when considering resource consent applications under the RMA. Although the training is intended to be voluntary, agreement has been reached that the training should be structured and marketed in such a way as to encourage attendance.

Four options have been outlined in the LGNZ proposal. Of these, the "flexible plus" option is preferred by LGNZ and MfE and is outlined in further detail in the proposal sent to local authorities (a copy of the proposal is tabled). Briefly, it is as follows:

- Two day workshops provided in eight locations nationally, held within three to four months of the October 2004 local body elections.
- Training content based on achieving core competencies such as the RMA regulatory framework, role of the Treaty in legislation, the role of hearings, hearing procedures, and decision-making.
- Workbooks to be provided at the workshops and to be completed by participants, reviewed and assessed by external trainers within six months of attendance at workshop.
- Chairs of hearing committees to undergo an "on-the-job assessment" by an external assessor observing and reporting on their performance.
- On accreditation a limited term certificate would be issued for three years, to be revalidated on attendance of an update seminar at 18 months, and reissued on expiry on attendance of a refresher workshop.
- Administration of the training scheme by a government agency (possibly MfE) with a manager and advisory board, and external providers contracted to develop course content, delivery, assessment and tutoring.
- Course development costs, along with those for setting up associated governance and management structures, may possibly be funded by the government.
- Delivery costs may be subsidised, with course costs of about \$750-\$1,000 per person in addition to the Councils paying costs associated with elected members attendance.

CONSULTATION

All Councillors and Community Board members have received copies of the LGNZ and MfE training proposal. An elected member seminar was also held on Tuesday 26 August 2003 to consider this Council's response to the proposed RMA training scheme.

A number of key issues were identified during the seminar session. These included:

- The current RMA training for Christchurch City Council elected members is cost effective and of a high quality, provided by David Collins (Commissioner) and member of the New Zealand Planning Institute.
- The LGNZ and MfE option using external providers and assessors was likely to be more expensive for elected members to attend, would lack local content and knowledge, and therefore may be at a lower standard than training that is currently received.
- The emphasis on using “external” trainers was not relevant, the importance was overall competency in RMA procedures.
- The Council needed a policy which outlined an agreed standard of training and level of competency required for resource consent hearing panel members and Chairpersons.
- LGNZ and MfE could have a role in developing training course content to NZQA standard which would then be implemented by local or “in-house” trainers.
- A regional training course developed with adjoining Councils may be of benefit to smaller Councils such as Banks Peninsula, Selwyn, Waimakariri, Hurunui and Kaikoura.

As a result of the discussions at the seminar a number of recommendations were agreed upon as follows.

Chair’s

Recommendation:

1. That an RMA Accreditation Subcommittee be established to meet on 1 September 2003 for the purpose of preparing a response to LGNZ and MfE on the proposed professional development training for RMA decision-makers.
2. That the Subcommittee be authorised to lodge a submission with LGNZ on behalf of the Council by 5 September 2003.
3. That the Subcommittee consist of Councillors Graham Condon, David Cox, Denis O’Rourke, Norm Withers, Sue Wells and Community Board member Mike Mora.
4. That officers report back to the Regulatory and Consents Committee on a draft Council policy document which will include an agreed standard of RMA training required by elected members sitting on resource consent hearing panels and the selection process for their appointment to the hearing panels.