

8. CHRISTCHURCH AIR PLAN

Since the last report to this committee (August 27, 1998), several developments have occurred with respect to the effort to address Christchurch's wintertime air pollution problem. Having identified domestic coal burning as a significant contributor to emissions of suspended particulate, the Canterbury Regional Council proposed to ban domestic coal burning from September, 1998. This action was successfully challenged on procedural grounds in the High Court by the Coal Producers' Federation, with the High Court ruling in October that:

- RMA section 369(11) does provide the Canterbury Regional Council with the authority to authorise or prohibit the use of any class of fuel in a clean air zone; and
- the Regional Council should provide an opportunity for all interested persons to be heard, and to cross-examine Council witnesses, before taking action pursuant to that authority in this instance.

Accordingly, the Canterbury Regional Council has arranged to conduct a hearing on the matter and appointed the Honourable Colin Fraser, retired High Court judge, to chair the hearing committee. Shortly after the coal ban hearing, the same committee will hear the submissions on the Draft Air Plan released to the public in June, 1998.

A letter was sent in February, 1999 to 8365 people who had previously identified an interest in air quality management, requesting them to indicate their interest in participating in the domestic coal ban hearing. This mailing was also supported by newspaper advertisements placed twice in *The Press* and *The Star*, and by public notices advising of the opportunity to register interest in participation. To date, 692 have said they wish to make written comments only, 343 have stated they wish to appear and participate in the hearing, and 893 have responded by saying they do not wish to participate further in the matter.

Submissions on the Draft Air Plan for Christchurch closed 30 September, 1998. The Draft Air Plan received a total of 718 written submissions; of these, 270 submitters requested to be heard.

The Christchurch City Council "Helping Hands for Heating" programme is progressing well. As of February, 1999, a total of 1500 households have taken up the programme, which provides a financial incentive of \$500 to convert open fires and coalburners to more efficient and less polluting forms of home heating, and other incentives to install energy efficiency measures. The City Council at its February 1999 meeting approved, in principle, an increase in the level of assistance to low income homeowners. This is subject to the Christchurch Air Plan or other regulatory measure coming into force and approval of appropriate budgetary provisions in the annual plan for 1999/00 and further financial years. These increases include 100% financial assistance for the costs of disabling an open fire or coalburner; subsidising 80% of the cost of a budget electric heating appliance; and 100% assistance for installation of energy efficiency measures. These are all subject to maximum financial limits. The eligibility criterion for the additional assistance is the holding by the homeowner of a community services card.

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Chairman's

Recommendation: For information.