

3. RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ACT: ANNUAL SURVEY OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES 1997/98

RR 10339

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Corporate Plan Output: Resource Consents	

The purpose of this report is to set out some of the key findings from the latest annual survey of local authorities relating to the Resource Management Act.

Each year the Ministry for the Environment conducts a survey of local authorities as part of a programme to monitor the implementation of the Resource Management Act 1991. This year the emphasis was on the quality of Resource Management Act implementation. This is because good implementation is seen as the key to enhancing the credibility of the whole Resource Management Act regime.

A copy of the survey results will be tabled at the meeting.

Some of the key findings from the annual survey are set out below:

Resource consent processing

- 60,157 resource consents were applied for in 1997/1998. This is 1,000 more than last year.
- The number of resource consents processed as non-complying was only 11%. Nearly half of the consents (46%) processed were discretionary.
- 5% of resource consents were notified – the most frequent consents notified were coastal, water, and discharge permits.
- Only 1% of resource consents were declined, and only 1% appealed.

Decisions on resource consents

- 90% of decisions were made by local authority officers. This is not surprising as 95% of resource consents are non-notified.
- 9% of decisions were made by councillors, either as part of a hearings committee or acting commissioners.
- Only 1% of decisions were made by independent commissioners.

Comment

Although the above figures relate to the national situation, they reflect fairly accurately the situation in the Christchurch City Council.

Processing times

- Only 62% of local authorities formally receive resource consent applications within one full working day of them being formally received at the office.
- 78% of all consents were processed within statutory time frames. This is a slight improvement from the previous year's 76%.
- Section 37 was used to extend statutory time limits for only 3% of resource consents processed.

Comment

In the case of the Christchurch City Council 69% of non-notified and 68% of notified resource consents were processed within statutory time-frames.

Cost of producing plans

- District Plans – the lowest cost incurred is \$50,000, the average, \$1,495,000, and the highest \$14,000,000.

Cost recovery

- There is wide variability in the recovery of resource consent processing costs, ranging from 14% to 100%.

Comment

Christchurch City Council cost recovery for resource consents in the 1997/1998 year was 70%.

Good practice in resource consent processing

- 51% of local authorities often provide estimates to potential applicants, while 33% sometimes provide them.

The Christchurch City Council falls into the latter category.

- Only 62% of local authorities check applications for completeness and formally receive applications within one full working day of an application arriving at a local authority.
- 75% of local authorities do not reset the to clock to zero once fuller information is received.

Christchurch City Council is one of those.

- Only 53% of local authorities have a structured process to check environmental effects.

- 74% of local authorities formally monitor performance in meeting resource consent time frames.

Christchurch City Council is one of those.

- 80% of local authorities often delegate decisions on notified resource consent applications to small council committees or hearing commissioners.

Christchurch City Council is one of those.

- 48% of local authorities use customer satisfaction surveys to find out what applicants think of their resource consent processes.

Christchurch City Council last conducted a customer survey two years ago but is in regular contact with major customers.

The annual survey does not in my view contain any real surprises as far as Christchurch City Council is concerned. It does however highlight some areas where there is a need for improvement, particularly in improving processing times for resource consents.

Chairman's

Recommendation: That the above information be received.