

Magazine of the Ministry for the Environment

ENVIRONZ

Take Taiao Aotearoa

July // 2008

08

We are all pivotal to changing attitudes towards environmental issues like our over reliance on carbon.



Ministry for the
Environment
Manatū Mō Te Taiao

IN THIS ISSUE

On the cover

- 08 World Environment Day celebrated New Zealand-wide

Feature

- 06 Climate change adaptation demands attention

Articles

- 03 New CE for the Ministry
Waste minimisation bill progresses
- 04 Safeguarding sustainable oceans
Environmental cooperation agreed with China
- 05 Businesses network for sustainable ideas
- 12 Quality planning – the RMA planning resource
- 13 RMA info made easy for public and business
- 14 Pre-birth testing is a tough quandary
- 15 Kitchen hand leads
Langham Hotel's award-winning initiatives
- 16 In brief

Cover image

Tom Callwood, vocalist and bass player from Samuel Flynn Scott and the Bunnies on Ponies, at the World Environment Day ecoparty

Enviroz is printed on 60 per cent recycled paper, using vegetable inks.

Celebrating success

Recognising the achievements of businesses and community to improve environmental practices is important for encouraging New Zealand to keep working towards becoming a sustainable nation. //

I am pleased to welcome Dr Paul Reynolds who takes over as the Ministry's new Chief Executive.

Demands and expectations of the Ministry have increased significantly over a relatively short space of time.

High environmental standards are important for New Zealand's identity, quality of life and its competitive advantage. This is requiring the Ministry to have a clear view of future desirable environmental outcomes. It requires deeper understanding of how different sectors can adjust to reduced greenhouse gas emissions, improve water and air quality, and minimise waste.

The Ministry's intentions are set out in its new Statement of Intent for 2008–2011. This document also states how the Ministry intends to develop its own knowledge and capability, so that it can operate effectively in a more complex and demanding work environment.

Priority areas for the Ministry include developing the evidence base relating to measures of environmental quality, understanding and influencing the pressures facing different areas of the environment, and being well informed by evaluation. Influencing in a highly strategic way is essential given the relatively small size of the Ministry and this requires working effectively in networked ways. International engagement and agreements have also become a major priority for the Ministry.

Success in achieving better outcomes will require environmental considerations to be better integrated into the decision-making of individuals, households, communities, business, farming, and government agencies. I am optimistic about the Ministry's ability to meet future challenges.

It has been a busy five months in my role as acting Chief Executive. I wish the Ministry well. Rachel Depree, General Manager of the Sustainable Business Group, is also leaving the Ministry to take on a private sector role and we wish her luck in the future. //



Howard Fancy

Acting Chief Executive and Secretary for the Environment
Ministry for the Environment

NEW CE FOR THE MINISTRY

Dr Paul Reynolds started at the Ministry for the Environment on the 21 July as Chief Executive and Secretary for the Environment.

“I am excited to be starting at the Ministry. For New Zealand and its future development, the Ministry for the Environment and its work plays a vital role. In overall government policy this is a time for the environment,” said Reynolds.

Reynolds comes from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF), where he has been Assistant Deputy Director General and Group Director – MAF Policy since 2002.

“In my role at MAF I worked closely with the Ministry for the Environment to progress work around climate change, water and sustainable land management. I am looking forward to doing more important work in those areas,” he said.

Reynold’s appointment was announced by the State Services Commissioner, Mark Prebble. According to Prebble, Reynolds’ leadership, policy development, and management experience, together with his intellectual capability and personal qualities, will assist him to successfully lead the Ministry through its complex work programme.

“His work at the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry developing strategies for major initiatives such as policy for water allocation and quality and the proposed climate change Emissions Trading Scheme, together with his sound grasp of environmental and sustainability issues, means Dr Reynolds has a very good understanding of the sector and the issues that the Ministry for the Environment faces,” said Prebble.

Reynolds has ten years’ experience in senior management roles and leading policy development in the public service. From 1992 to 1998 he was the Science Manager, Immunomolecular Plant Biology, at the Horticulture and Food Research Institute of New Zealand. Prior to this, he was the Section Leader, Immunology and Plant Molecular Biology at the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research.

Reynolds has a Bachelor of Science (Honours) and a PhD in Plant Biochemistry from the University of Otago. In 1990 he was awarded a commemoration medal for his contribution to New Zealand science. //



01 // Dr Paul Reynolds, Chief Executive and Secretary for the Environment.

WASTE MINIMISATION BILL PROGRESSES

The Waste Minimisation Bill has just had its second reading in Parliament as this issue of *Environz* goes to print. The purpose of the bill is to encourage a reduction in the amount of waste we generate and dispose of in New Zealand and lessen the environmental harm of waste. The bill emphasises investment in ‘front-of-pipe’ solutions to waste, encouraging material efficiency, innovation, and good design.

In a nutshell, the act:

- // puts a levy on all waste disposed of in a landfill
- // helps and, when necessary makes, producers, brand owners, importers, retailers, consumers and other parties take responsibility for the environmental effects of their products – from ‘cradle-to-grave’
- // allows for regulations that make reporting on waste mandatory for territorial authorities and operators of landfills and recycling facilities with the aim of improving information on waste
- // clarifies the roles and responsibilities of territorial authorities with respect to waste minimisation
- // introduces a new board to give independent advice to the Minister for the Environment on waste minimisation issues. //

For more information email jeffrey.seadon@mfe.govt.nz or phone (04) 439 7630.



01 // Tyres can pose a risk to the environment when not disposed of properly.

SAFEGUARDING SUSTAINABLE OCEANS

01 // The Exclusive Economic Zone is the area of sea and seabed that extends 12–200 nautical miles offshore.



A framework for managing the environmental effects of activities in New Zealand’s Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), is heading into its final stage of development.

“The oceans around New Zealand are a hugely important resource, and we need to prepare for new activities in the EEZ and fill the gaps in controls around environmental effects of activities already operating there,” said Minister for the Environment Trevor Mallard.

Legislation is being drafted by the government, that brings new mechanisms to monitor and manage environmental effects in the EEZ. This new regime will provide more certainty for industries operating in marine areas and will encourage investment in sustainable offshore activities.

The EEZ legislation will focus on the environmental effects of new and previously unregulated activities. Existing laws for fisheries and maritime transport, for example, will continue to operate largely as at present.

Environmental effects of existing activities such as disturbance of the seafloor through mining

and petroleum activities will be managed as will the effects of possible future activities such as marine farming, energy generation, carbon capture and storage.

The legislation will set out a new rules and consents regime for the EEZ. The Environment Minister will make decisions on consent applications to carry out activities and the Ministry for the Environment will be responsible for administering the legislation, including developing regulations. An ‘EEZ Commissioner’, housed within the Ministry will be established to process consent applications and to manage monitoring and enforcement of the proposed new regime.

The legislation will also contain provisions that enable stakeholders to have input into decisions about activities in the EEZ, including specific processes for Māori engagement. //

For more information see:
www.mfe.govt.nz/issues/oceans

ENVIRONMENTAL COOPERATION AGREED WITH CHINA

New Zealand’s recent Free Trade Agreement with China includes an associated side agreement on environmental cooperation.

“Officials from New Zealand’s Ministry for the Environment will start engaging with China’s Ministry of Environmental Protection this year to share priorities on environmental issues and develop a programme of cooperative activities,” said Ministry staff member Lesley Woudberg.

Environmental Cooperation Agreements (ECA) seek to improve environmental practices and increase the capacity of both New Zealand and partner countries to address environmental concerns.

Woudberg explains that an ECA sets out some common commitments by affirming the sovereign right of each country to set its own environmental policies and standards and that each country will not weaken its environmental laws and regulations in order to seek a trade advantage.

New Zealand has already concluded such agreements in association with the free trade deals with Thailand and with Chile, Singapore and Brunei. //

For more information email
lesley.woudberg@mfe.govt.nz
or phone (04) 439 7649.



01 // Dave McFarlane, Design Mobil, a member of the Sustainable Business Network and Sustainable Business of the Year 2007.

02 // Rachel Brown, Chief Executive of the Sustainable Business Network.

BUSINESSES NETWORK FOR SUSTAINABLE IDEAS

The Ministry for the Environment is partnering with business support providers like the Sustainable Business Network to improve the quality and accessibility of information about sustainability.

More businesses than ever before are interested in sustainability but they don't necessarily know what to do and they don't want to spend a lot of time or money finding out, says Rachel Brown, Chief Executive of the Sustainable Business Network (SBN).

The SBN is a New Zealand-wide membership organisation providing practical tools and a forum for its 750 business members to share ideas. Brown was a founder of the SBN which started in 2002 with three or four companies that were talking about environmental or social business practice.

"Companies want to take sustainability on board because they are motivated to be good corporate citizens and have genuine concerns. They also want their businesses to be seen to be doing the right things. Others are motivated by market access – for example meeting purchasing criteria," said Brown.

"Businesses like being a part of our network because we get new innovations and ideas sparking out of conversations and they like our practical tools like the Get Sustainability Challenge."

The Ministry is funding SBN to help it expand the number of businesses participating in its services, such as the "Get Sustainable Challenge". This is a two-hour comprehensive assessment covering waste, energy and resource efficiency, valuing your people, community involvement and safety and health.

Following the assessment, the participating company is provided with a feedback report, resources about how to improve, and access to workshops. The company can then enter the Get Sustainable Challenge Awards. According to Brown, companies love being recognised for their achievements. Last year there were 150 entries to the awards making them arguably the premier sustainable business event of the year.

Traditionally most companies have been interested in energy and waste, but now transport is becoming more relevant, says Brown. There has also been a growth in sustainable product and services development, and "eco effectiveness", according to Brown.

The Ministry is working on a range of initiatives to increase the knowledge, understanding and practice of sustainability within New Zealand firms.

At small business expos this year, the Ministry sponsored a stand and, with the SBN and The Natural Step, provided free sustainability advice to businesses. This included a 20-minute sustainability 'health check', which gave companies ideas and understanding of the opportunities unique to their operation, such as innovation in product design or appealing to new customers. //



Upcoming business events sponsored by the Ministry:

"Sustainable Design for the Bottom Line"
run by Better by Design.
Auckland, 1 September

Designers Institute of New Zealand Best Design Day & BeST Design Awards.
Auckland, 10 October.

For more information on sustainable business see www.sustainability.mfe.govt.nz/, email libby.masterton@mfe.govt.nz or phone (04) 439 7745.

For more information on the SBN "Get Sustainable Challenge" see www.getsustainable.org.nz.



01

climate change

ADAPTATION DEMANDS ATTENTION

The world's scientists tell us that climate change is already happening, so we will need to respond to the changes if we are to prosper in the future.

When we hear about climate change in the news, we mostly hear the causes of climate change and about how to reduce our impacts by restricting and reducing our greenhouse gas emissions over time. However, adapting to the physical impacts of climate change is important too.

What exactly is "adaptation"? Well, in the world of climate change language, it is the phrase used to describe the ability of people to cope with the physical impacts of climate change.

While policies to limit the causes of climate change, like the emissions trading scheme, aim to reduce carbon dioxide emissions in the longer term, adaptation is about coping with the challenges and taking advantage of opportunities presented by a changing climate.

As part of its portfolio of climate change work, the Ministry for the Environment has a programme to help local government and other stakeholders to better understand and consider climate change adaptation when carrying out their day-to-day operations.

In particular, the programme has developed guidance materials for local authorities to assist them in assessing and managing the risks of climate change in their strategic planning processes.

Environment Ministry General Manager Sue Powell says preparing for the physical impacts of climate change makes good sense.

“Adaptation is about risk management and being more resilient to current climate extremes like floods and droughts,” she said.

In 2007, the National Institute of Water and Atmosphere (NIWA) was commissioned to produce a second edition of two guidance manuals for local government called *Climate Change Effects and Impacts Assessment* and *Coastal Hazards and Climate Change* (both originally published in 2004). The second editions were commissioned following the release of the United Nations International Panel on Climate Change Fourth Assessment Report, with its updated findings on climate change, and the availability of new climate change information for New Zealand.

The updated *Climate Change Effects and Impacts Assessment* was officially launched at a stakeholder and media briefing in May. The manual provides the latest projections of the expected impacts of climate change, both at a national and regional level in New Zealand.

The second updated manual, *Coastal Hazards and Climate Change*, is also due to be released this year.

Powell says taking on board the information in these documents will help government, councils, businesses and communities to plan ahead to reduce the costs associated with the physical impacts of climate change and to take advantage of any opportunities they bring.

Of particular importance are infrastructure and developments that can be expected to cope with climate conditions not just now, but in 50 to 100 years’ time.

She says many organisations are already preparing for climate change, such as the Christchurch City Council, which is planning for the effect of sea-level rise on the Avon River.

An adaptation case study – the Avon River
Christchurch is the biggest New Zealand city to be built on a flood plain. As the climate changes, it is likely that Christchurch will face increased flooding in some areas, particularly around the lower Avon River and the area where it flows into the sea.

To address these concerns, Christchurch City Council undertook a study in 2003 to examine the potential effects of climate change on the Avon catchment and associated coastal areas and to assess how these risks could be managed.

While the stop banks on the Avon flood plain currently provide adequate flood protection for most properties, in the future they are likely to be overtopped with greater frequency. This is due to the projected increase in the frequency and intensity of storms, storm surge, flooding and sea-level rise.

Options to reduce future flood risk

The 2003 report helped the council evaluate how climate change impacts could be integrated into risk management planning for the Avon catchment and associated areas. It focused primarily on an economic analysis of likely damages, and the response options available to local government to mitigate the likely damage.

The report suggested that establishing minimum floor levels in buildings would be particularly beneficial in areas with relatively low flood stopbanks. It recommended that the council considers setting different minimum floor levels for each floodable area of the city.

The option of improving flood stopbanks was also considered, but the report showed that stopbanks would only show an immediate benefit in one area.

Subdivision restrictions would not offer a net aggregate economic benefit in terms of preventing flood damages over the next 100 years, although the report said these may be worth considering in future.

Tidal barrages were considered unlikely to be feasible as they would not yield a net benefit and they would have considerable environmental and amenity issues.

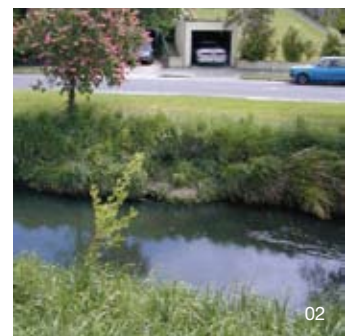
Avon case study conclusion

Since this report was undertaken, changes have been made to the council’s city plan and aspects incorporated into its urban development strategy that seek to reduce the risks to the community from the physical impacts of climate change.

Powell says this type of response is exactly what the Ministry for the Environment wants to see happen across New Zealand.

“It is not a case of being alarmist it is simply getting people to use the scientific information available to minimise the risks and maximise the opportunities that come with the physical impacts of climate change.” //

Adaptation is about risk management and being more resilient to current climate extremes like floods and droughts.



02 // Heathcote River.

03 // Heathcote River in flood.

For more information see www.mfe.govt.nz/issues/climate/adaptation/ or email stephen.swabey@mfe.govt.nz or phone (04) 439 7462.



World Environment Day

CELEBRATED
NEW ZEALAND-WIDE

New Zealand hosted international World Environment Day 2008 with enthusiasm and pride. Both the official international events and community organised events showed Kiwis out in force acknowledging the importance of our environment and kicking the carbon habit.

Two contrasting moments, just a few minutes apart in Wellington's Te Papa, encapsulated the international significance and purpose of the United Nations' World Environment Day on 5 June.

In the first, President Anote Tong of Kiribati movingly told world media about the plight of his tiny island nation, parts of which are expected to be submerged under the Pacific Ocean by the end of this century due to climate change.

"(Climate change) is not an issue of economic development, it is an issue of human survival," he told the sober audience.

In the second moment, joy and optimism enveloped a room where the global winners of a 15,500-entry United Nations children's painting competition themed on taking action to reduce climate change were presented with their awards and – in a uniquely New Zealand moment – a chance to greet one-legged kiwi Sparky.



02



03



04

- 01 // As part of Environment Canterbury's Stepup Canterbury WED event, native plants were given to motorists at selected petrol stations to offset some of their emissions.
- 02 // Achim Steiner, Executive Director of UNEP with Sparky the Kiwi at the children's painting competition.
- 03 // The first prize-winning artwork in the UNEP children's painting competition, by Gloria IP Tung.
- 04 // Auckland City Council gave out free eco-bulbs and reusable calico bags to commuters at Britomart Transport Centre.
- 05 // President Anote Tong of Kiribati.

President Tong, whose state visit was timed to allow him to attend New Zealand's first-ever hosting of World Environment Day, captivated his audience as he described the growing desperation of Kiribati's nearly 100,000 inhabitants.

His people watch helpless as their traditional crop areas are swamped by the sea and ruined, and living areas erode into the advancing tides. Now, the President and the country's religious leaders are leading calls for the world to recognise the impact of their carbon emissions.

Achim Steiner, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) listened to President Tong's address, before telling the audience, "It's a humbling prospect when a nation has to begin talking about its own demise, not because of some inevitable natural disaster, but because of what we are doing on this planet."

Upstairs, the mood was more uplifting, as 14-year-old Hong Kong student Gloria Tung was presented by Achim Steiner and Prime Minister Helen Clark with a prize for winning the children's painting competition.

The theme for the competition was 'Climate change: Actions we can take now', and the winners from five continents reflect the global nature of World Environment Day celebrations. An exhibition of 64 works will be on display in Te Papa until the end of August.

Gloria Tung says news of climate change frightened her into action through her artwork. "My parents also taught my sister and me to be environmentally friendly when we were small. So we both know that we have a really important mission to protect the environment," she said.

Prime Minister Helen Clark said, "Art is a way for ideas to be expressed and thoughts provoked. In the past, art has inspired great changes in the world. So it is superb to see so many young people around the globe have been inspired to give us their impression of actions we must take to reduce the impact of climate change."

Levin teenager Janelle Sanson received a placing in the Asia Pacific category and was on hand at the ceremony, along with about a hundred other school children. Her artwork portrayed her depiction of an ecosystem fuelled by the world's tears.

Kick the carbon habit

World Environment Day was established in 1972, with hosts including countries such as Brazil, the US, and China, and much smaller nations such as Sweden, Lebanon, and last year's host Norway.

This year's theme was 'Kick the Habit – working towards a low carbon economy'. New Zealand was announced as the host last October.



05

(Climate change) is not an issue of economic development, it is an issue of human survival.



05



06



07

05 // Wellington was decked out with the "Kick the CO₂ habit" posters, billboards and flags.

06 // Nuhaka Hikoi organised by Te Iwi O Rakaipaaka Inc with participation from Kaumatua and tamariki aged 4 years to 90 years.

07 // UNEP Director Communications, Satinder Bindra, presenting a Green Ribbon Award for "Environment in the spotlight" to (middle) Kathie Ellery & Jill White (right) from the Green Rig Horizons Regional Council.

Achim Steiner said for this year's host UNEP looked for a country which could symbolize a more environmentally conscientious society. He described New Zealand as a visionary trailblazer in the move towards reducing carbon emissions. And in a letter to the Prime Minister he said, "It is my firm conviction that this has been the most successful World Environment Day to date".

The UNEP released two publications to mark World Environment Day: *Kick the Habit: The UN guide to Carbon Neutrality*; and *Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation in the Tourism Sector* which Achim Steiner said was particularly interesting for New Zealand, given its successful inbound tourism industry.

Todd Kriebel, who led the Ministry for the Environment team which oversaw New Zealand's hosting, says Kiwis got behind the event from one end of the nation to the other.

"This event allowed New Zealand to showcase on a world stage our many actions towards environmental sustainability. It was fantastic to see the obvious exuberance from ordinary New Zealanders in celebrating what the environment means to us."

About 130 organisations throughout the country received contestable grants from the government to support community-based World Environment Day 2008 events. Many other events took place, run by schools, iwi, councils, businesses, and community groups.

While the main official and partnered events were based in Wellington, Auckland and Christchurch, Todd Kriebel says it was the regional events which cemented the success of New Zealand's official hosting.

Green Ribbon Awards open festivities

The week-long celebrations began with the annual Green Ribbon Awards (see the insert in this issue for more detail) run by the Ministry for the Environment. The awards honour outstanding contributions to safeguarding the environment, and at the Town Hall ceremony the Prime Minister said she could think of no better way to kick-off the World Environment Day hosting.

She presented the first lifetime achievement award to Dean Schneider, a Dunedin environmental educationalist. Over a long period of time, Schneider has dedicated himself to helping young people achieve their potential and encourages them to develop their environmental knowledge and skills.

Around Wellington, billboards, posters and flags drew attention to World Environment Day. Members of the public carried out a "freeze" event on Lambton Quay, stopping dead still among lunchtime throngs to raise awareness of climate change.

The city's environmental award-winning waterfront Waitangi Park hosted an exhibition of 22 photographs and posters with the theme 'Towards a Low Carbon Economy' – many were previous entries in UNEP's *Focus on Your World* competition.

The idea of provoking thought through the universal language of art continued with the Art for the Environment Exhibition *Moving Towards a Balanced Earth* hosted at Te Papa. Running until September, the exhibition is a collaboration between the Natural World Museum, UNEP and the Ministry for the Environment. It features works from 27 artists representing 20 countries and will travel to major cities including Chicago and Monaco.



08



09

It was fantastic to see the obvious exuberance from ordinary New Zealanders in celebrating what the environment means to us.

Noted New Zealand artists Ralph Hotere and Bill Culbert, Alison Clouston, and Geoff Dixon have works in the exhibition. The Whitireia Community Polytechnic kapa haka group gave a stunning welcome to the official guests at the gala exhibition opening.

Talking about climate change

High-level discussions, debate, idea-sharing, and the surprise appearance of a Hollywood legend, marked a series of business, research, economic and academic-based events about tackling climate change which Anote Tong, Achim Steiner and Dr Rajendra Pachauri, chairman of the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, attended during the week.

Environment Minister Trevor Mallard spoke at a meeting of New Zealand's burgeoning business membership of UNEP's Climate Neutral Network, congratulating the more than 15 companies here which are – along with New Zealand – now members of the global outreach organisation.

The Hillary Institute in Christchurch held an inaugural symposium to launch a four-year theme of climate change action.

Former film star turned California Governor and environmental advocate Arnold Schwarzenegger spoke to a business symposium in Auckland via video link, wearing green cowboy boots and tie. Delighting the audience with tales of the similar prejudices faced by early adopters of body building and the early adopters of environmental sustainability, he encouraged the audience to continue to take action and seize business opportunities.

Planting, gardening and biking

With a touch less razamatazz, but no less enthusiasm, nearly 80 schools and early childhood centres undertook funded World Environment Day projects, including native and fruit tree planting, establishing worm farms and edible gardens, organising bike to school days, wetland restoration, and installing rainwater harvesting equipment all featured in their activities.

Todd Kriebel says that while many of the projects focused on one day, they often involved the wider community in the hope of raising ongoing awareness of environmental issues.

“Ultimately, we hope these projects will lead to enduring change in sustainable behaviours,” Kriebel said.

Among the many projects, Aoraki Mount Cook School established a book exchange to give residents access to something to read that doesn't require a 150km round trip to the nearest library; Te Kura Mana o Whangaparaoa rural school near Opotiki built a secondhand windmill; and Wellington East Girls' College created an organic garden.

But perhaps the event which most demonstrated the community feel and unique New Zealand flavour to World Environment Day 2008, was held by Te Iwi o Rakaipaaka, in rural Hawke's Bay.

School students, whanau and hapu members grabbed bikes and pedaled their way through Wairoa, Whakaki and Mahia districts, planting trees at 20 locations, and generally had a great laugh while promoting kicking the carbon habit. To ease aching muscles, the event concluded with a healthy picnic at the Morere Hot Springs. //

08 // Hungry helpers from Makoura Early Childhood Community Centre at the Makoura Stream planting day.

09 // Freeze event on Lambton Quay.

For more information on the World Environment Day events see www.world.environment.govt.nz/, email wed@mfe.govt.nz or phone 0800 WED 2008

For information on sustainability see www.sustainability.govt.nz/



12

QUALITY PLANNING – THE RMA PLANNING RESOURCE

The Quality Planning website, also known as ‘QP’, aims to promote best practice under the Resource Management Act. New and updated guidance notes covering a range of resource management topics are now available on the website.

QP is the only dedicated Resource Management Act (RMA) best practice guidance website in New Zealand. It enables information to be easily accessed and updated as RMA case law and practice evolves. It receives over 25,000 visits per month.

Launched in 2001, QP was created to allow practitioners to share best practice and information rather than keep on re-inventing the wheel.

QP is primarily for local authority staff and RMA consultants, but is also useful for councillors and independent commissioners, environmental managers, students, environment and community groups, iwi and others involved in resource management under the RMA.

The website is managed in partnership between the Ministry for the Environment, Local Government New Zealand, the New Zealand Planning Institute, the Resource Management Law Association, and the New Zealand Institute of Surveyors.

There are now over 77 guidance notes on the website. These cover plan development, consent processing, monitoring, enforcement, and a diverse range of other planning topics. This year the Ministry developed several new guidance notes, including guidance on second generation plans, and updated a range of existing guidance notes, including one about environmental monitoring and reporting.

Further new guidance is being developed on coastal, residential and rural issues. Updated enforcement guidance will soon be available.

The QP website gives access to a plans database providing information on the status of RMA plans, links to council plan web pages and to legislation. The website also includes an online library and monthly news update.

QP is important not only as a guide for best practice but also as a foundation for best practice training, targeted council assistance and reviews of council performance. //



RMA INFO MADE EASY FOR PUBLIC AND BUSINESS

The success of the RMA INFO free helpline has warranted continued government support. It has received over 1300 calls since August 2006. People who used the helpline have told Ministry advisers that they are thrilled with the service.

Fleur Monks from Gisborne says she was concerned that a new development was causing dirty water run-off into the local stream, but needed to know how to talk with the council about this issue. She looked up the Ministry for the Environment website and found the 0800 number.

“I was guided to Section 5 and then Section 17 of the act and talked through my options and from there I had confidence to work out how to approach the subject.

“It was great to talk to a person who had time to direct me through the act and how it related to my particular problem. I then had a place to start,” Fleur said.

A booklet series also launched in 2006 brings the Resource Management Act (RMA) down to a non-legal level pitched at everyone – that is, non specialists.

A new booklet on enforcement has just been published. It has short paragraphs on matters such as: who can take enforcement action; types of enforcement; enforcement orders, and prosecution. The booklet is one of 14 booklets in a box set that have diagrams and flowcharts to help to ‘demystify’ the RMA and make it ‘user friendly’.

Councils are the primary authority responsible for implementation of the RMA and central government supports this role. While the Ministry does not give RMA advice, we are giving tangible help to guide people to useful information and in the right direction. //

Box sets called “An Everyday Guide to the RMA” are on display at councils, BizInfo outlets, law centres and many schools.

They can be ordered by emailing: publications@mfe.govt.nz.

The number for the RMA info line is: 0800 762 4636.



PRE-BIRTH TESTING IS A TOUGH QUANDARY

How far should we go with pre-birth testing? Who has the right to decide? What might be the consequences of developing more tests?

These types of questions were tackled by participants in the Toi Te Taiao: Bioethics Council's online deliberation carried out last year and reported in "Who gets born?: Pre-Birth Testing".

The Bioethics Council used a deliberative process for engaging the public on the subject of pre-birth testing that included face-to-face meetings and online discussion.

Most mothers have pre-birth tests such as blood tests and ultrasound. But chair of the Bioethics Council, Martin Wilkinson explains that because the range of things we can test for is expanding, the council felt it was timely to engage on the question of pre-birth testing and also pre-implantation genetic diagnosis.

"Pre-birth testing has allowed many families to avoid having children who would suffer from painful, disabling or fatal conditions. For others, it has given them time to adjust to the knowledge that their baby may be born with a disability or medical condition," Wilkinson said.

Similarly, but more advanced, is the testing of embryos created outside of the mother's body. Pre-implantation genetic diagnosis (PGD) involves testing one or two cells from these embryos, with the aim of identifying certain medical conditions. An embryo without those conditions is selected and transferred to the mother, while affected embryos are discarded.

"The desire to have a healthy baby is universal among expectant parents. But views are mixed

on the extent to which pre-birth testing helps — and should be allowed to help achieve this outcome," Wilkinson said.

The Bioethics Council Secretariat helped the council pioneer the deliberative method which included components like the online 'choicebook' that are new in this country.

The deliberative dialogue project first brought members of the public together to frame the issues. It then involved 18 deliberative events around the country including five hui and two fono. People were asked to move beyond individual views and work towards finding a common direction by weighing up costs and consequences of their choices.

John Pennington, who manages this work for the council explains that policy-makers sometimes assume that, by arming the public with scientific facts, people will understand new technologies. However, he says, the mere availability of information does not in itself generate understanding, let alone acceptance.

"Deliberation promotes civic involvement and responsibility. It can increase trust between the public and ultimate decision-makers. It can produce a unique form of non-expert or 'socially constructed' knowledge."

"So rather than judging points-of-view, participants were asked to group the points-of-view into distinct approaches to pre-birth testing according to the underlying values and principles and then to consider them," Pennington explained.

The Ministry for the Environment provides secretariat services to the Bioethics Council. //

To read the report and bioethics recommendations visit:
www.bioethics.org.nz.

For more information on deliberation as a method of consultation contact:
john.pennington@mfe.govt.nz
or phone (04) 439 7673.



01 // Nicholas Blake, Environmental Project Supervisor at the Langham Hotel which won a Green Ribbon Award.

KITCHEN HAND LEADS LANGHAM HOTEL'S AWARD-WINNING INITIATIVES

Nicholas Blake began his career with Auckland's Langham Hotel as a kitchen hand in March last year. This year, he and the Managing Director John Dick, collected a Green Ribbon Award on behalf of the Langham Hotel as a result of the leading role Blake played in establishing its environmental policy.

Blake says his love for the environment extends from his childhood when he would vacation at Pacific islands, going diving and exploring the wildlife. As a result, he decided to study environmental management at the Bay of Plenty Polytechnic. Three years later he completed a Bachelor of Science and a Postgraduate Diploma at Auckland University in Environmental Science in 2006.

Despite feeling that he now had the tools, experience and understanding to apply his knowledge, he was told he needed experience before getting a job in his area of expertise. "I needed money at the time and took a job as a steward (kitchen hand) at the Langham Hotel," he said.

Four months later Blake started designing a sustainability proposal, highlighting eco operational efficiencies and corporate social responsibility. This led to a 12-month contract as the hotel's Environmental Project Supervisor.

Since then, the Langham Hotel has achieved Green Globe Benchmarked status in recognition

of its environmental initiatives. The hotel's environmental policy focuses on reducing, reusing and recycling waste and packaging; improving the efficiency of energy usage; as well as investigating and using environmentally friendly products. Core practices include gauging the environmental integrity of potential suppliers; a carbon offsetting programme for guests; the installation of light sensors and eco lights in areas requiring 24-hour lighting, and time controls on kitchen fans. The hotel also recycles its packaging, cardboard, paper, containers, and office products.

Blake and his colleagues are developing an external programme called "Guests of the Earth" to create awareness of hotel programmes while also offering guests opportunities to participate. The hotel is also working with tertiary institutions advocating sustainability and promoting programmes like Green Globe to students studying hotel management.

Blake is adamant that businesses need to move away from the view that natural resources only exist to fuel our needs and believes that business opportunities are emerging as demand grows for carbon neutral economies and best practice environmentally friendly solutions.

Blake said he was humbled to receive the Green Ribbon Award on behalf of the hotel and its 350 employees and says it serves as motivation for the Langham Hotel to raise the bar within the hospitality industry. //

The Ministry for the Environment runs the Green Ribbon Awards each year. These awards recognise the outstanding contributions made by individuals, organisations and businesses to sustaining, protecting and enhancing New Zealand's environment.

For more information see www.mfe.govt.nz/withyou/awards/

IN BRIEF

Examples of quality urban design

The Ministry has published a new volume of nine case studies to show how quality urban design improves our towns and cities. The volume provides examples of ways that local government can incorporate urban design in strategies, plans and guidelines and quality developments. Each case study includes evaluation based on the seven design qualities in the NZ Urban Design Protocol.

Download the publication from:

www.mfe.govt.nz/publications/urban/

For a printed copy phone (04) 439 7546.

Sources of drinking-water standard now in effect

The National Environmental Standard for the Sources of Human Drinking-water came into effect on the 20 June. This regulation will reduce the risk of contaminating drinking-water sources such as rivers and groundwater.

Two supporting technical documents have been published and are available from:

www.mfe.govt.nz/laws/standards/drinking-water-sources.html

Successful year for Agrecovery

Product stewardship programme Agrecovery collected more than 80,000 old and unwanted agricultural containers for recycling this year. The programme provides growers, farmers, foresters, and other primary industry chemical users with an environmentally safe way of disposing of their containers.

Agrecovery received initial funding from the government's Sustainable Management Fund and the Sustainable Farming Fund and is now completely self-funding.

State of the environment report wins green print award

The Ministry's milestone state of the environment publication, *Environment New Zealand 2007*, has won a gold Pride in Print award for using best practice environmental printing processes.

The awards recognise and promote the achievement of excellence within the New Zealand printing industry.

Todd Kriebel, General Manager Reporting and Communications, says the award is an achievement that sets the standard for green publishing.

FOR YOUR DIARY...

Consultation – what's coming up

The wider community will be asked to provide input into the following consultations on environmental issues over the next few months. The plans and dates are intended as a guide only and may be subject to change.

Topic	Approx Date	Input	Contact
Proposed national environmental standard on ecological flows and water levels	Until 5pm 29 August	Submissions	Whitney Bouma, whitney.bouma@mfe.govt.nz (04) 439 7512
Ministry for the Environment is about to consult on the proposed national environmental standard on on-site wastewater systems	Until 5pm 26 September	Submissions	Barry Johnson, barry.johnson@mfe.govt.nz (04) 439 7769