



Report 05.636
Date 11 November 2005
File ENV/01/07/02

Committee Environment
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Report on the Resource Management Law Conference, 6-7 October 2005

1. Purpose

To report on our attendance at the Resource Management Law Conference held in Christchurch.

2. Comment

Overall this was an excellent conference.

Unfortunately the weather on the Saturday meant that part of one of the study tours had to be abandoned.

2.1 Keynote Speakers:

Professor Malcolm Grant, a New Zealander now with the University College of London, who specialises in environmental and planning law was a keynote speaker. In his paper he discussed the mismatch between scientific risk-assessment and public opinion, and the adversarial versus meditative approaches to dispute resolution. In short communication and information availability is the key!

Bob Meyer, Director of Planning with a private planning and architecture company in Australia talked about the development of Sydney from the time of the first Town Plan in 1909 through to the present day and the way in which urban design considerations were made and have had to be adapted to the changing demographics.

In essence the message was that you need good bones to a plan which are based on the topography and transport needs, minor adaptations are then relatively easy.

Some interesting Statistics – in 1939 Sydney planned for a population of 2 million by 1980 – but it actually reached 3.2 million. In 1968 they planned for 5 million by 2000 but it is actually 4 million because the Inner City has lost

population to the Satellite cities. They are currently planning for 6 million by 2051 as they expect revitalising of the Inner City and apartment living will increase again with the advent of smaller households.

The biggest car use growth is created by children being taken to school in cars. He believes there is a case to stop allowing this!

Sydney is in fact well down the track in terms of urban design and this has been facilitated by an effective commuter rail service. Meyer stressed that it simply wouldn't have worked if the rail system hadn't been installed at the outset. The essential message left by Meyer was that the solution to Sydney's coordination problems lay in collaboration between local authorities rather than amalgamation.

2.2 Breakout sessions:

"Finding Common Ground" - a presentation by Environment Court Commissioner, Diane Menzies and mediator Gay Pavelka. While the discussion was around the mediation process much of it can be applied to hearings as well. Rather than go into detail, a copy of the overheads are in the councillors' lounge.

"Visual Simulation Technologies – Accuracy and Uses" presented by "Truescape" a company which uses the most up to date technology available to produce true to life graphics for resource consent hearings. He demonstrated their accuracy with actual photographs overlaid on material they produced. It is most impressive. However, don't expect this at every resource consent hearing – it is still expensive and is mainly used for large applications such as the West Wind project at Makara. Their folder is in the councillor's lounge and includes a DVD of some of their work. As costs come down it is possible to envisage this technique becoming more and more popular.

2.3 Study Tours:

"Air Quality – Christchurch Port Hills". The best part of this tour was the Devonshire Tea and that Sign of the Takahe! Overall it was rather too technical, but in short Christchurch is well on track with open fireplace and woodburner bans along with a retrofitting programme. It was interesting to note that on a beautiful calm, morning with blue skies following two days of gale force winds, that there was air pollution distinctly visible over the city from the hills. Christchurch is biting the bullet on the use of open fires despite considerable public resistance to any curtailment.

"Demands on the Coastal Marine Area – Lyttleton Harbour". The one hour tour on the Catamaran was cancelled because of high winds, so the session was held in the Port Offices. The logging operation on port land has on site treatment for water runoff (mainly from rain and from dampening down for dust) before discharge into Diamond Harbour. It is still not clear where much of the pollution identified in the inner harbour originates. Lifestyle development is a major concern in the local community and the District Plan is

rigorously upheld through the planning process. The smallest piece of bush is protected. Intensified use of large land holdings is therefore now rare.

Long established kiwi baches at Taylors Mistake have been reduced in number and some have been relocated following a lengthy battle over their continued existence. It seems that all parties now accept the outcome.

It was fascinating to learn of the high level cooperation achieved by the greater Christchurch's Urban Design Strategy. There is no doubt that this exercise is producing real benefits in terms of functional integration and it might even lead to some amalgamation, such as Christchurch City and Akaroa.

3. Communication

We both thank the Greater Wellington Regional Council for the opportunity to attend the conference and recommend it as a worth while conference for others in the future.

4. Recommendations

That the Committee:

1. ***Receive the report; and***
2. ***Note the contents.***

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