



## RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ASSESSMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

If you are applying for resource consent you will need to prepare an Assessment of Environmental Effects (AEE).

A resource consent is permission from Council to do something that might affect the environment, or permission to use a resource in some way. Preparing an AEE is only one step in making a resource consent application.

It is up to you to provide an AEE statement with your resource consent application. Council will not accept your application without an AEE.

### What is an AEE?

An AEE is a statement of the effects of a proposed activity on the environment. It:

- Increases understanding of the environment effects of what you are proposing to do
- Identifies alternative ways to avoid, remedy or mitigate adverse effects on the environment (see below)
- Helps you take others' views into account
- Can result in a better design of your proposal.

### How do I prepare an AEE?

#### ***Step 1 - Identify the activities for which resource consent is sought***

Fully understanding the environment effects of an activity is essential for the proper preparation of an AEE. You will need to think about your proposal and how it will change the site you intend to use/develop.

#### ***Step 2 - Inspect/describe the site***

Even if you already own and live on the site, you need to think about its physical limitations and locality, e.g. is the site flat or sloping? Are there any significant trees or vegetation? Are there any unusual features? What is on the neighbouring properties? Is there access to Council services?

#### ***Step 3 - Talk to staff at Council***

Once you have done your homework, it is a good idea to talk to someone at Council, as they are likely to have pamphlets, checklists, and forms to help you prepare an AEE. If you don't know how to use a regional / district plan, ask Council staff to help you

#### ***Step 4 - Identify the environmental effects***

Understand the environmental issues arising from your proposal.

### What is an 'environmental effect'?

An environmental effect is any change to the environment created by an activity.

This includes effects on ecosystems, natural resources (land, air and water), buildings and people. Environmental effects can be:

- positive or negative
- temporary or permanent
- past, present or future
- cumulative (occur over time or in combination with other effects)
- of high probability
- of low probability but high impact

Some examples are: increases in traffic, soil erosion, changes to the character of the street or landscape, noise, silt run-off, dust, blocked views, shading, degradation of historic or cultural sites, vegetation loss, decreases in water quality/quantity, loss of privacy, odour, visual impact, changes to coastal processes, discharge of contaminants into air / water, loss of recreational values.

AEE's should anticipate the unexpected. You need to look for specific environmental effects arising from your proposal in combination with the site and its locality. Once you have identified the actual and potential effects, you should consider how significant they are likely to be. You should also use the above list to help you consider the nature of the effects as well as their scale, intensity, duration and frequency.

For example: an extension to an existing building may result in the following effects:

- Temporary effects (while the extension is being built) - dust, noise, and fewer parking spaces
- permanent effects—loss of privacy, shading, visual effects and the loss of significant trees
- cumulative effects—change in street character and loss of urban vegetation

### ***Step 5 - Re-evaluate your proposal***

#### **Use the AEE process to help design your proposal.**

You may decide that some environmental effects will be significant and that you need to change your proposal to avoid, remedy, or mitigate them. You should then think about alternative ways to achieve the same goals while considering the environmental effects each alternative may have. This process can result in a 'win win' situation, with better proposal design and better environmental outcomes.

What does 'avoid, remedy, or mitigate' mean? These are terms used in the Resource Management Act. Each represents a different way of addressing an adverse effect so that it is acceptable.

For example: Adverse visual effect of a quarry.

- You would avoid the visual effect if you did not quarry or the quarry was located out of sight.
- You would remedy the visual effect if you filled in the hole.
- You would mitigate the visual effect if you planted trees around the hole.

All three actions may address the adverse effect, but all three outcomes may not be acceptable to the community. It is the role of the AEE to work out whether an effect needs to be addressed, and the best way of doing this.

### ***Step 6 - Finalising the AEE: What do I need to include?***

The amount of information should correspond to the scale and significance of the effects.

You need to include enough information in your AEE so that Council can evaluate your proposal. The amount of information should correspond to the scale and significance of the environmental effects that may be generated by your proposal. Some proposals will require more detail and more analysis than others, e.g. adding a carport onto the side of a house is likely to require much less information and detail than a multi-storey development in an area that is valued for its natural attributes.

Your AEE needs to include:

- A full description of the proposal, including the site and locality (including a site plan and plans of your proposal)
- A description of the environmental effects, including the significance and nature of the effects (address specific environmental effects that you have identified as well as referring to issues identified in the District and / or Regional Plan)
- A description of alternatives to avoid, remedy, or mitigate any significant environmental effects
- An assessment of any risks to the environment that may arise from hazardous substances and / or the discharge of contaminants
- A record of any consultation, including names and views of people you talked with
- A discussion of any effects that may need to be controlled or monitored, how the control or monitoring will be carried out and by whom.

## What else do I need to consider?

### *Communicate openly with interested or potentially affected people and groups*

Talking to your neighbours, iwi groups and other interested or affected parties about your proposal will help you understand some of the effects your proposal may have on others. Although not required by law, it is a good idea to talk to people early on in the process.

### *Use the Plan to identify what your AEE might need to address*

The relevant Regional / District Plan should help you to identify what you need to put in your AEE. You should use the Plan to help you understand how important the issues arising from your proposal are likely to be.

### *Status of activities in Plans*

The status of the activity will also make a difference to what you should include in your AEE:

**Controlled and restricted discretionary activities** — Council can only consider matters listed in its Plan when deciding whether to grant your resource consent. Your AEE should focus only on the matters in the Plan.

**Discretionary or non-complying activities** — you need to consider fully all the environmental effects you have identified arising from your proposal (these are not limited by what is in the Plan). You are therefore likely to need a more substantial AEE.

### *What happens if I don't prepare a good AEE?*

It is NOT adequate to state in your AEE that there are NO environmental effects.

It is important that you provide Council with a well prepared AEE, otherwise Council may:

- Not accept your resource consent application.
- Turn down your resource consent application.
- Impose a lot of conditions on your resource consent.
- Ask you for more information, delaying the time taken to process your application.
- Commission someone else to review your application at a cost to you.