

GUIDE TO ASSESSMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

What is an Assessment of Environmental Effects (AEE) and how will it help you?

The Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) requires you to prepare an AEE to accompany your application for resource consent. A good AEE will greatly assist in having your application considered quickly and efficiently.

The AEE process:

- Helps identify the effects your activity may have (both negative and positive).
- Helps you consider the views of other people affected by your activity.
- Helps identify how you can modify your activity to control adverse effects
- Assists Council and affected parties to fully understand your activity
- Assist Council in determining whether to grant consent or not, and whether conditions are appropriate.

Why do you need a Resource Consent in the first place?

The RMA requires Council to administer the use, development and protection of resources so that they are sustainably managed. The key to this is to ensure that adverse effects of a proposal, both positive and negative, are considered before an activity is allowed to happen. Activities which generate no or only minor adverse effects will generally be permitted by the District Plan. Those activities that potentially generate adverse effects require a resource consent so that those adverse effects can be controlled. If they can not be controlled, the activity may not be allowed to proceed.

What is an ‘‘Effect’’ on the ‘‘Environment’’?

The RMA defines ‘‘effect’’ and ‘‘environment’’ in very broad terms. This means that you must look very carefully at your proposal as all effects, whether positive or negative, short term or long term, must be identified. It is very unlikely that an activity will have no adverse effects.

‘‘Effects’’ can be

- Positive or negative
- Temporary or permanent
- Past, present, or future
- Cumulative (arising over time or in combination with other effects)

All effects must be identified, regardless of scale, intensity, character, or frequency. Potential effects of high probability and potential effects of low probability which have a high potential impact must also be identified.

The financial viability of your activity is not an effect that can be considered by Council under the RMA. However positive social, economic and cultural effects are a relevant consideration.

‘‘Environment’’ is defined as including;

- Ecosystems and their constituent parts, including people and communities
- All natural and physical resources
- Amenity values
- The social, aesthetic and cultural conditions which affect or are affected by the matters above.

How detailed should your AEE be?

The level of detail in your AEE should be proportional to the potential effects of your proposed activity. It does not need to be exhaustive but should provide enough information for Council to fully evaluate the potential effects.

To do this you must look at the District Plan and the activities status to identify the relevant issues.

The District Plan will contain objectives, policies and possibly assessment criteria which will be relevant.

The activities status (e.g. controlled, restricted discretionary, discretionary, non-complying) will usually determine the issues you will need to address.

For controlled and restricted discretionary, the Plan will set out the matters to address. For discretionary and non-complying, a wider range of issues need to be considered, so the objectives and policies of the plan become important.

What are the Consequences of Not Providing an AEE or an Adequate AEE?

The RMA requires every resource consent application to be accompanied by an AEE. Consequently, Council is unlikely to process your application without one.

An inadequate AEE -

- Reduces your ability to fine tune your proposal before you lodge it
- Potentially increases processing costs and time because you will be asked for further information or Council will spend more time trying to understand it.
- Reduces the chance of getting consent.

If you are having difficulty in preparing an AEE (particularly if your development is reasonably significant) you may need to contact a planning professional . Council will be able to provide you with a list of such professionals.

To assist you with the preparation of an AEE, Council has prepared simplified forms which should be completed for:

- Quarries
- Signs
- Relocated dwellings
- Minor, general issues.

The form relevant to your inquiry is attached. It should be completed and returned with your application which should also contain the following information:

- (a) Application fee in the prescribed amount (note that an additional charge may also be payable).
- (b) Copy of current Certificate of Title for the land subject to the application.
- (c) Locality Plan.
- (d) Site Plan.
- (e) A full description of the intended use of the property.