



caring about you & your environment

Report 00.607

15 August 2000

File: Y/12/2/0

Report to the Rural Services and Wairarapa Committee
from Steve Blakemore, Manager Planning and Resources

Customer Satisfaction Survey – Consents

1. Purpose

To inform the Committee of the outcomes of the recent AC Nielson survey of customer satisfaction in the Consents and Compliance area.

2. Background

2.1 In 1997 AC Nielson conducted a customer satisfaction survey relating to consents and compliance activities of both the Wairarapa and Environment Divisions.

2.2 A repeat survey was undertaken this year with the objectives to:

- Compare overall levels of satisfaction with the 1997 results.
- Determine current levels of satisfaction with the different aspect of service provided, so that further areas for improvement can be identified.
- Identify the relative importance of the different aspects of service in relation to overall satisfaction so that priorities for improvement can be set.
- Measure satisfaction levels with complainants.

2.3 Complainants were a new category that covered people who had complained about an operative resource consent between 1 March 1999 and 30 April 2000.

2.4 Customers were surveyed between 28 April and 22 May 2000, with 234 interviews completed in Wellington and 140 in the Wairarapa. There was a 30% response rate.

3. Results

3.1 The two main themes of the results were:

- There is a high level of satisfaction with performance.
- Customers have noticed substantial improvements in the service provided.

- 3.2 Overall satisfaction ratings with Council increased from the 1997 figure of 76%, with 82% of customers rating the service as good, very good or excellent.
- 3.3 Wairarapa had the highest overall satisfaction score of 84%, an increase of 13% from the 1997 survey result of 71%.

Wellington's rating increased from 81% to 83%.

- 3.4 Priorities identified for improvement were:

Recent Applicants (47 Wairarapa, 71 Wellington)

- Being less strict in levels of enforcement (although this would increase dissatisfaction with submitters and /affected parties).
- Providing more useful monitoring reports.
- Explaining how long consent processing will take.
- Making annual charges fairer.
- Explaining the annual charge.

Existing Consent Holders (75 Wairarapa, 72 Wellington)

- Providing more useful monitoring reports.
- Fairness of terms and conditions of consents.
- Ease of contact with Resource Advisor.

Submitters (10 Wairarapa, 44 Wellington)

- Finding the right person to talk to.
- Explaining how submissions were taken into account.
- Improvements in monitoring.

Complainants - the least satisfied of all groups
(8 Wairarapa, 47 Wellington)

- Explaining options when they don't like the outcome of a complaint.
- Improving monitoring of consent compliance.
- Resolving complaints.
- Providing better explanations as to the reasons for decisions.
- Providing consistent information.
- Making sure the complaint is investigated thoroughly.
- Decreasing the length of time by which enforcement action must be taken.

4. Discussion

- 4.1 AC Nielson commented:

"The increases in customer satisfaction observed across all groups of customers can be considered to be an excellent result. Increases of this magnitude are not often seen in customer satisfaction research and are obviously the outcome of a concerted effort to improve levels of performance."

- 4.2 The distinction needs to be made that our customers have no choice in dealing with the Council. Their involvement arises because of the legal requirements

of the Resource Management Act. Consent applicants are required to obtain and pay for something they may otherwise regard as their right.

- 4.3 A review of the Planning and Resources Department Customer Service Plan is proposed during this year. Areas for improvement noted in the survey will be included in this review.
- 4.3 The results are most heartening to Wairarapa Consents and Compliance staff. They show that overall their job is being well done and is viewed by customers as such. The survey results endorse the considerable focus and effort that is given to both staff training and customer service.

5. Communications

No additional publicity is proposed on this item.

6. Recommendation

That the Committee receives the report and notes its contents.

Report prepared by:

Approved for submission by:

S D Blakemore
Manager, Planning and Resources

Colin Wright
Divisional Manager, Wairarapa