

Partnerships and Moving Towards Achieving the Targets in the New Zealand Waste Strategy

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Summary

Since November 2003 the Ministry for the Environment (MfE) has been actively partnering with industry through an agreement with the New Zealand Water and Wastes Association (NZWWA). From November 2003 to July 2004, Charles Willmot was seconded to NZWWA to deliver on four work programmes. These work programmes involved the rewriting of the model trade waste bylaw, the auditing and certification of liquid and hazardous waste contractors, the promulgation of the biosolids guidelines and an investigation of the options for providing accurate wastewater information.

Following the success of this arrangement, Tracey Morgan has joined Charles on secondment and NZWWA has hired Jeff Page to further strengthen the team and to provide valuable input. During the 2004/05 financial year eight programmes are being carried out through NZWWA on behalf of MfE. These programmes are described in this paper, along with the programmes performed during the 2003/04 financial year and their outcomes.

1 Introduction

The Ministry for the Environment (MfE) aims to “deliver the environment New Zealanders expect and deserve”¹. Following public consultation in 2002 the Ministry was challenged to show leadership, work in partnership with other sectors and organisations and to fix problems. As part of this, MfE has been actively partnering with industry through an agreement with the New Zealand Water and Wastes Association (NZWWA). Between November 2003 and July 2004, Charles Willmot was seconded to NZWWA to deliver on four work programmes. The aim of these work programmes was to achieve waste minimisation initiatives consistent with the New Zealand Waste Strategy (NZWS). The four work programmes carried out between November 2003 and July 2004 involved:

- the rewriting of the model trade waste bylaw,
- the auditing and certification of liquid and hazardous waste contractors,
- the promulgation of the biosolids guidelines, and;
- an investigation of the options for providing accurate wastewater information.

Each of these programmes is discussed in more detail below.

Following the achievements made last year, Charles remains on secondment for the 2004/05 financial year. Tracey Morgan joins him in this arrangement and NZWWA has hired Jeff Page to assist, funded through the Drainage Managers Group. There are eight programmes to be delivered in the 2004/05 financial year and these programmes are also discussed below.

¹Ministry for the Environment website (<http://www.mfe.govt.nz/about/do.html>)

2 Work Programme and Results for 2003/04

Four work programmes were undertaken to provide a number of outputs to achieve waste minimisation initiatives consistent with the New Zealand Waste Strategy. These are discussed below.

2.1 Model Trade Waste Bylaws

The key objectives of the NZWS are²:

- to develop a sound legislative basis for waste minimisation and management,
- efficient pricing of policies,
- high environmental standards,
- adequate and accessible information; *and*,
- the efficient use of materials.

In 2002, only 40 of the 75 territorial local authorities had trade waste bylaws in place. Target 8.1 of the NZWS says that “by December 2005 *all* territorial local authorities will have implemented and will be monitoring the Model General Trade Waste By-laws based on the New Zealand Standard Model General Bylaws, Part 23 – Trade Waste or its equivalent.

The existing Model Trade Waste Bylaw contained legal inconsistencies and did not comply with the Local Government Act (2002). In order to overcome this, it was necessary first to negotiate the intellectual property rights with Standards New Zealand prior to redrafting the Model Trade Waste Bylaw. Following approval from the trade waste officers conference of the process to be undertaken in November 2003, the Model Bylaw underwent a short track process under the management of Standards New Zealand. A draft was produced in April for public comment and the rewritten Model Trade Waste Bylaw was printed in September and is now readily available through Standards New Zealand.

The rewritten Model Trade Waste Bylaw has addressed the issues associated with the previous version, is user-friendly, is provided in electronic form on a compact disc and can be easily edited to allow clauses to be altered to suit the specific needs of different areas of New Zealand.

2.2 Liquid and Hazardous Waste Code of Practice

The Liquid and Hazardous Waste Code of Practice (The Code) was based on New Zealand Standard Code of Practice NZS 5433: 1999 Transport of Dangerous Goods on Land. The Code was developed by members of industry, the New Zealand Water and Wastes Association and local and regional councils and was published in 2003.

The main aims of the Code are to³ “provide generators, handlers and receivers as well as regulators and assessors with detailed, practical advice on sound waste management controls...” and to “protect human health and the environment”.

The NZWS contains a target for the introduction of an integrated and comprehensive national hazardous waste management policy to effectively manage risks to people and the environment.

² Ministry for the Environment, (2002), The New Zealand Waste Strategy, p. 3

³ The New Zealand Water and Wastes Association. (2003). The Liquid and Hazardous Waste Code of Practice, p. 7

The production of a Code was an important step in this process. Last financial year the Code was sold at a cost of \$450 per copy and approximately eighty percent of the industry has purchased a copy.

A further step towards managing waste was achieved through the internal auditing of approximately 10% of liquid and hazardous waste contractors. These contractors were presented with certificates and are now considered “Code Compliant”. Investigations into a full accreditation system are underway.

2.3 Biosolids

The NZWS possesses a target that “by December 2007, more than 95% of sewage sludge currently disposed of to landfill will be composted, beneficially used or appropriately treated to minimise the production of methane and leachate.”

Over a period of two years a group of local and regional council representatives and industry personnel prepared the Guidelines for the Safe Application of Biosolids to Land in New Zealand (Biosolids Guidelines). These guidelines were published in 2003. The guidelines seek to:⁴

- Safeguard the life-supporting capacity of soils
- Promote the responsible use of biosolids
- Protect public health and the environment
- Identify the risks associated with biosolids use and promote best practice methods for minimising these risks
- Encourage regulatory authorities to adopt a consistent approach to regulating the application of biosolids to land
- Create an awareness within the community of the benefits and risks of biosolids use
- Minimise the risks to the economy

Over the past year the Biosolids Guidelines have been publicised and distributed by NZWWA. A survey was undertaken to determine the usefulness of the guidelines to those that have a copy. This survey found that the majority of respondents felt that the guidelines addressed the aims they set out to achieve. 45% of those people responding to the survey felt that the aims could be better satisfied by a national environmental standard and a significant number of respondents felt that the national environmental standard would simplify the marketing and use of biosolids.

Late last financial year work began to look at the possibility of a national environmental standard for biosolids. Workshops were held with industry and local government representatives to determine if a national environmental standard should be developed. Following these meetings it was felt that a national environmental standard should at least be investigated. To achieve this, NZWWA was contracted by the Ministry, to provide an industry perspective on the most appropriate form of a national environmental standard. NZWWA established a working group to address this and this group has been providing this output this financial year.

⁴ The New Zealand Water and Wastes Association. (2003). Guidelines for the Safe Application of Biosolids to Land in New Zealand, p. 10

2.4 Wastewater Information

For some time there has been insufficient information about wastewater treatment plants in New Zealand. This has hindered the development of good policy and has also lead to difficulties in providing community groups (e.g. interest groups, media etc) with accurate information. Local authorities are required to collect information about their wastewater facilities and this information has to be regularly reported to the community in their Long Term Community Council Plans.

The CoSINZ database developed by the Ministry of Health in conjunction with the new subsidy scheme, and Neptune database, developed by NZWWA with a grant from the Sustainable Management Fund, both contain some of the information required by stakeholders, however these databases can both be difficult to use and may contain information considered by some to be commercially sensitive. To analyse the options available a workshop was held with key stakeholders, including representatives of local and central government. As a result of this workshop, a scoping report was written in which it was suggested that either the Neptune database be redesigned to be more user-friendly or a new database be developed. This work has been ongoing this financial year.

3 Work Programme for 2004/05

As mentioned in the Introduction above, there are eight work programmes underway this financial year. Each of these programmes is explained below, along with the key objectives of each.

3.1 Model Trade Waste Bylaw

This project has furthered the work undertaken in the 2003/04 financial year. The Bylaws are now printed and available from Standards New Zealand. In order to ensure that all territorial authorities can achieve Target 8.1 of the NZWS, marketing of the Bylaws needs to occur. In addition, councils have been and will continue to be contacted by telephone and email to ensure that they are aware of the Model Trade Waste Bylaws and how they can be readily implemented.

3.2 Extension of the Liquid and Hazardous Waste Code of Practice

Work is being undertaken to extend the Liquid and Hazardous Waste Code of Practice. The original Code does not currently cover any of the following:⁵

- Stock trucks
- Stock effluents in farmer's own trucks
- Recreational vehicles (e.g. campervans)
- Vehicles and drivers transporting single or double portable toilet units, hired for private or commercial use, unless the vehicle /operator is involved in the provision of the portable toilet service
- Operators from and vehicles used at wastewater treatment plants.

⁵ The New Zealand Water and Wastes Association. (2003). The Liquid and Hazardous Waste Code of Practice, p. 7

This financial year the Code is being extended to include portable toilets, caravans and mobile homes and stock truck effluent. Much of the new content will be developed by industry with help from MfE and NZWWA. Once the new sections are completed, they will be published and sent out free to all current holders of the Code of Practice.

3.3 Waste Tracking System and the Management of Liquid and Hazardous Waste

This programme is associated with the Liquid and Hazardous Waste Code of Practice. The objectives of this programme are to develop an industry-led accreditation system for liquid and hazardous waste contractors and to establish a waste tracking system in New Zealand.

The industry-led accreditation system could be achieved by either:

- The contractors becoming certified under HSNO
- The drivers having an endorsement on their licences to be able to transport dangerous goods
- Having the Code of Practice registered with NZQA so that contractors can obtain a recognised qualification

Following a study of the options available, the group of certified code compliant liquid and hazardous waste contractors formed a Special Interest Group of NZWWA, and decided to move the industry forward. Having reached this decision, work has been taking place to assist and encourage these contractors to work towards accreditation. The method of accreditation deemed to be appropriate has taken some time to establish, and is on-going. Once accreditation has been achieved, communication with territorial local authorities will occur to inform them of the accreditation system which has been developed and to request that they preferentially seek accredited contractors. Our discussions with a number of local authorities has suggested that they would look favourably on this arrangement and in fact request an early resolution of the accreditation process so that this can proceed.

The second part of this programme involves developing a waste tracking system for use in New Zealand. Studies of overseas liquid and hazardous waste tracking systems have shown that there are many, significantly different styles of systems and operations.

The system in Sydney, Australia (WasteSafe), tracks the collection, transport and safe disposal of grease trap waste. The system is sophisticated with encoded dockets, ID cards for collection vehicles and drivers, portable scanners, magnetic flow meters and a central body for collecting and administering the data. WasteSafe can be used to produce reports for customers showing an overview of activity for a specified time period, which meets the requirements of the administering authority, but does not seem to deal with the broad variations in Hazardous Waste that we would like to track in New Zealand..

The “Controlled Waste Tracking System” from Western Australia, consists of a browser Oracle-based interface to a database. Waste generators, treatment facilities and licensed carriers all become licensed and can all access the database system, however only licensed carriers are given permits to move controlled waste. Licenses for controlled waste carriers are available online, and any new business involved in the transport of controlled waste must apply for a license. The system supersedes a trial of the Sydney system which was found not to be satisfactory for the

range of wastes requiring tracking in Western Australia. Investigations continue in order to introduce this or a similar system to New Zealand.

3.4 National Environmental Standard for Biosolids

This work also carries on from work undertaken last financial year. Four workshops have been held with representatives of industry and local government. These workshops have provided insight into whether the option of an NES should be pursued. The working group has developed a report containing their recommendations, which was recently presented at the annual New Zealand Water and Wastes Association conference. This report will be passed onto the standards team within the Ministry for the Environment, who will actually write the NES.

3.5 Wastewater Information

This work programme continues on from the work undertaken in the 2003/04 financial year. The objectives of this programme are to have a user-friendly database containing wastewater information which is useful and can be readily updated. To date this work has involved determining what information we need to know, what data we already have and what information we need to obtain.

Another part of this programme involves establishing an evaluation programme for wastewater treatment plants to enable the identification of standard and substandard treatment plants. Target 9.5 of the NZWS says that “by December 2020, all substandard wastewater treatment facilities will be upgraded, closed or replaced with systems that comply with all relevant regional and coastal plans, standards and guidelines”. In order to allow treatment facilities to upgrade, a clear definition of “substandard” is required.

3.6 Oxidation Ponds

According to the Neptune database, there are 67 oxidation ponds that were developed during the 1960s and 1970s. These oxidation ponds require regular desludging and maintenance, however there are no best management guidelines currently available in New Zealand. To fill this gap, oxidation pond best management guidelines are being prepared in conjunction with industry.

In addition to this records of the oxidation ponds in New Zealand will be updated to include:

- Location and size
- Date of construction
- Date of last desludging and date of proposed next desludging
- Present depth of liquid and sludge
- Discharge environment
- Contact person

Keeping record of this important information will allow good communication with operators of oxidation ponds.

3.7 Resource Directory to Co-ordinate the efforts of the many disparate groups

There are many disparate groups that work on a variety of issues within the broader area of wastewater treatment. At present, communicating with these groups takes a lot of time and effort. To overcome this, these groups need to be catalogued and their contact details regularly updated. This work programme is designed to do exactly that so that in future communication is much easier.

This programme will be carried out by gathering information on all the groups and operators who work within the wastewater treatment industry, analysing and cataloguing this information in a database and updating the information regularly.

3.8 Regional Workshops

Regional workshops are planned for early 2005 in six regional centres (Dunedin, Christchurch, Palmerston North, Napier, Rotorua, and Auckland). The main objective of these workshops is to promote the work programmes being undertaken in the MfE and NZWWA.

It is anticipated that these workshops will cover the following topics:

- The Model Trade Waste Bylaw
- Biosolids Guidelines and NES
- Landfill Waste Acceptance Criteria
- Extended Producer Responsibility
- The Liquid and Hazardous Waste Code of Practice

More information regarding the workshops will be available in January 2005.

Conclusion

For almost a year the Ministry for the Environment has been successfully partnering with the New Zealand Water and Wastes Association to deliver outputs to achieve waste minimisation initiatives consistent with the New Zealand Waste Strategy. During the 2003/04 financial year four programmes were completed and this financial year eight work programmes are being worked on. The Ministry for the Environment appreciates the opportunity to partner with key stakeholders and believes that partnerships can benefit both the Ministry and industry.

We would welcome any feedback you have regarding the programmes discussed in this paper or any wastewater work programmes you believe the Ministry could undertake.