

section 3.4 |



appendix 1

Context and process

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3.4 Public Meetings: the process

Introduction

The Commission developed an extensive consultation programme to meet the requirements of its terms of reference (the Warrant).

The consultation programme included the Public Meetings, Hui, Youth Forum and Formal Hearings of Interested Persons.

This paper is a summary of the process involved in conducting 15 Public Meetings throughout New Zealand, from Invercargill to Whangarei, over a five-week period in the last quarter of 2000. An analysis of the information gleaned at these meetings is contained in Appendix 3 (see section 2: “Public Meetings: summary of outcomes”).

Regulatory requirements regarding consultation

The Commission was directed to “receive representations upon, inquire into, investigate, and report” on the strategic options and any changes considered desirable to existing regulatory processes regarding genetic modification in New Zealand.

The Warrant also referred to the Commission’s consultation process:

And you are required, in carrying this Our Commission into effect, —

- to consult with the public in a way that allows people to express clearly their views, including ethical, cultural, environmental, and scientific perspectives, on the use, in New Zealand, of genetic modification, genetically modified organisms, and products; and
- to adopt procedures that will encourage people to express their views in relation to any of the matters referred to in the immediately preceding paragraph; and
- to consult and engage with Maori in a manner that specifically provides for their needs; and
- to use relevant expertise, including consultancy and secretarial services, and to conduct, where appropriate, your own research

The manner in which the Commission consulted with the New Zealand public was also influenced by section 4A(1) of the Commissions of Inquiry Act 1908. The Act differentiated between the general public and those who satisfied the Commission they had an interest “above and beyond” that of the general public. Applications for Interested Persons were sought and some 12 weeks of hearings were allocated to hear them, their witnesses and/or legal counsel. Further details regarding this process are described below (see “Formal Hearings: the process”). The Commission was, however, free to determine the method by which it would consult with the general public.

Interpretation of consultation requirements

The Commission announced its inquiry brief and consultation programme on 7 August 2000, at the opening of its three-day Scoping Meetings, the Commission’s first interaction with the New Zealand public:

The Warrant requires that we consult with the people of New Zealand in a way that allows them to express their views clearly. Some already have strongly held opinions. We expect there will be firm, forthright submissions. Some people feel passionate about the issues. We hope to have a rational, civilised, focused debate. We would like to think this can be achieved notwithstanding the existence of strong or passionate viewpoints. There will be no point in people shouting at one another, or at the Commission. Many have not yet committed themselves to any stance. They are entitled to the opportunity to do so.

The Commission stated that its consultation with the New Zealand public would be “as open as possible, and as inclusive as we can [be], giving everyone who wishes to present their views to us a fair and reasonable opportunity, although not necessarily by way of a personal appearance”. It identified the Internet as one tool by which it would achieve these objectives.

The Commission also made it clear that it was working to a deadline of 1 June 2001: “To achieve completion by due date, we will have to limit the time that can be allocated to any one topic, or to any person or organisation. Although there must always be room for flexibility, we will need to adhere to a tight timetable”.

The Commission’s Opening Statement also acknowledged public concern regarding the definition of Interested Persons and who might contribute to the Commission’s inquiry:

The distinction between so called “interested persons” and the general public is not one the Commission has established. The same law applies to all Commissions of Inquiry and we are bound by it. We assure the public that their voice will be heard. “Interested person”

may give the wrong impression, we know all of you are really interested, but those happen to be the words of the Act of Parliament.

In addition to assuring the public that “their voice will be heard” despite not being defined as Interested Persons, the Commission indicated that it would “arrange less formal public meetings and consultations in a number of other places”.

Establishing a public consultation programme

The Commission’s objectives in establishing a public consultation programme were:

- to determine public response to the issues addressed by the Warrant
- to provide an opportunity for ‘ordinary New Zealanders’ to express their views
- to meet its consultation obligations, as outlined in its Warrant
- to meet its deadline of 1 June 2001
- to provide a human face to a national inquiry
- to be as accessible as possible.

In order to hear the views of members of the public not accorded Interested Person status, the Commission established the following consultation methods:

- Public Meetings
- written submissions
- Hui
- Youth Forum
- Public Opinion Survey.

Establishing the Public Meeting programme

In order to meet the above listed objects, some form of public meeting was identified as the most effective method of consulting with as many New Zealanders as possible within a short time frame.

The Public Meeting programme was designed to assist the Commission in gathering information on the issues outlined in its Warrant in an informal setting. The purpose was, therefore, not to hear submissions but rather to allow the Commission access to the views and opinions of a cross-section of New Zealanders.

To achieve this, a format similar to that used for the Scoping Meetings, held on 7, 8 and 9 August 2000, in Wellington, was used for the Public Meetings. The workshop process using a ‘consensus card sort’ (see below “Operational detail: Public Meetings: Workshop process”) was a proven method for addressing contentious issues, such as genetic modification, and was designed to generate constructive discussion rather than a polarising slanging match.

By combining a workshop with an ‘open floor’ and ‘question time’ in its Public Meetings, the Commission was able to gauge the public’s views on the issues identified in its Warrant and other issues, as well as determining which of the issues were of most importance within each region.

Following are details of the rationale and process involved in planning the public meeting programme.

Location

As a national commission of inquiry, based in Wellington, the Commission was mindful of the need to consult on a regional basis.

Fifteen regions were identified and public meetings were arranged in the centres that contained the largest population mass and were most accessible from surrounding areas. The Commission was also determined to visit New Zealand’s remoter regions such as Southland, the West Coast and Northland.

Meetings were held in the following centres:

- Invercargill Southland
- Dunedin Otago and Oamaru
- Christchurch Canterbury and Timaru
- Greymouth West Coast
- Nelson Marlborough and Nelson
- New Plymouth Taranaki
- Palmerston North Manawatu
- Wellington Wellington, Kapiti and Wairarapa
- Hamilton Waikato
- Rotorua Bay of Plenty
- Napier Hawke’s Bay
- Gisborne Gisborne
- Manukau City Auckland
- Auckland City Auckland
- Whangarei Northland.

Some regional centres in which the Commission did not hold public meetings were included in the Commission's Maori Consultation programme.

(For a complete schedule of the Commission's public meetings, see "Operational detail: Public Meetings: Schedule".)

Dates and times

The public meeting programme commenced on 18 September 2000 in Invercargill and concluded on 16 November 2000 in Whangarei. The 15 public meetings were scheduled over a five-week period, during which the Commission commenced its Formal Hearing process on 16 October 2000 and its Maori Consultation programme on 4 November 2000.

To maximise its consultation time in each regional centre and meet its other obligations, the Commission scheduled the Public Meetings for weekdays between 2 pm and 8 pm (except for Greymouth and Whangarei, when meetings were held between 11.30 am and 4 pm and 11 am and 4 pm respectively).

The six-hour meetings were designed to accommodate those who wanted to spend a considerable amount of time with the Commission as well as those who were able to attend only after business hours.

Venues

Venues in which the public meetings were held varied from local theatres to hotel conference rooms. Dependent on the population centre, venue capacity ranged from 50 to 200 people.

Programme

The scheduled public meeting programme is shown on the following page.

Wherever possible, the programme was flexible. Members of the public were welcome to arrive at any time during the six-hour meeting and be included in the process. In addition, participants were able to modify the process: the meeting in Whangarei was extended by an hour to accommodate additional speakers.

Details of each component of the programme are outlined below.

Mihimihi

Local iwi and/or papatipu representatives were invited to conduct a welcome (mihimihi) for the Commissioners and Public Meeting attendees.

Welcome

Local government representatives were invited to attend to welcome the Commission and also chair the 'questions from the floor' segment of the Public

Programme for Public Meetings

Time	Event	Participant
2 pm (Greymouth 11.30 am) (Whangarei 11 am)	Mihimihi Welcome	Local iwi or papatipu representative Local government representative Commission
2.30 pm (Greymouth 12 pm) (Whangarei 11.30 am)	Workshop	Facilitators
5 pm (Greymouth 1.30 pm) (Whangarei 1 pm)	Break	
5.30 pm (Greymouth 2.15 pm) (Whangarei 2 pm)	Workshop report back	Workshop participants
7 pm (Greymouth 3 pm) (Whangarei 3 pm)	Questions from the floor	Chaired by local government representative
7.50 pm (Greymouth 3.50 pm) (Whangarei 3.50 pm)	Closing statements	Local government representative Commission
8 pm (Greymouth 4 pm) (Whangarei 4 pm)	Close	

Meeting. The invitation was extended as acknowledgement of local government involvement in genetic modification regulations and to provide the Commissioners with information on local issues.

The welcome also included an opening statement by the Commission. The statement included reference to the Commission’s purpose, the nature of its inquiry and its expectations of the day’s proceedings. Commissioners also had the opportunity to introduce themselves and provide a brief outline of their backgrounds and interests.

Workshop

The facilitator introduced the workshop programme, which involved identifying, discussing and recording issues of interest using the consensus card sort process.

Identifying issues to discuss

At the outset of the public meeting programme, participants were asked to respond to questions based on the following eight topic headings:

- human health issues
- consumer choice/labelling issues
- cultural/spiritual issues
- environmental issues
- economic issues
- future use issues
- global development issues
- ethical issues.

The topic headings and questions were based on the Warrant and also the outcomes of the Commission's Scoping Meetings. The questions were made available at the Public Meetings as issue-specific A4 flip charts and a complete list was available as a five-page document. A copy of the 'Public Meetings Questions' document was posted on the Commission website.

The questions were designed to stimulate discussion within the workshop phase of the Public Meetings. In no way were the questions intended to be definitive or indicate any particular viewpoint of the Commission. In addition, participants were invited to identify their own questions.

After the identification of issues, participants were encouraged to select a table at which a topic of personal interest was being addressed. Participants were encouraged to move between tables in order to provide input into more than one issue.

Consensus card sort process

The consensus sort process is a means of encouraging workshop participants to identify, acknowledge and/or understand a variety of opinions surrounding a complex issue. This process provided the Commission with an informed, comprehensive view of issues of interest and concern within a region. The consensus card sort process was also successfully used at the Commission's Scoping Meetings in August 2000.

The consensus card sort process involved four phases and required participants to:

- identify a question from the issue-specific flip chart and then write down their individual response to each question on a separate white card
- collect the white cards on the table and redistribute them to participants at the table
- collate the white cards into piles of similar questions, discuss and write a summary of the content of each pile of collated cards on blue and/or green cards
- write the summarised issues on a large sheet of paper and nominate a participant to report back to the Commissioners on the summary points.

The process was outlined in a one-page document available at the Public Meetings and on the Commission website.

Participants were informed that the information contained on the blue and/or green cards would be recorded on the Commission's website as a summary of the public meeting workshops. Those who left early were requested to hand in their white and coloured cards to the facilitators to ensure their contribution to the workshop was recorded. Dependent on other commitments, Commissioners were in attendance during the workshop process.

Workshop report back

After a half-hour break, the facilitators welcomed newcomers to the meeting and outlined the next phase of the programme. Participants were advised that the following portion of the meeting would be tape-recorded as a reference for the Commission.

Workshop participants were then invited to report back on their discussions to the Commissioners via a nominated representative who utilised the summary sheets for reference. During this phase of the programme, Commissioners were invited to seek clarification and ask questions of the discussions held by the facilitators.

Once all representatives had reported back, the facilitators thanked workshop participants for their efforts and handed over the meeting to the local government representative to chair the next phase.

Questions from the floor

The local government representative, as chair, provided guidelines as to the next phase of the Public Meeting. Dependent on attendee numbers, participants were advised that their speaking time would be limited (often to three minutes) and that preference would be given to those who had not already spoken.

Commission staff involved in public meetings

Two independent contractors were hired to facilitate the workshop component of the public meetings. They were employed for their knowledge of facilitation of large groups, their experience in facilitating meetings on contentious issues and for their understanding of the English and Maori languages and protocol. Both also had previous experience working with the Commission at its Scoping Meetings.

In addition, a representative of the Commission secretariat attended each meeting to assist in the facilitation of the meetings and to provide secretariat support to the Commissioners and general public and media liaison.

Recording of attendees and proceedings

In order to record the views expressed during its public consultation programme, the Commission implemented the following processes for different phases of its public meetings.

Attendees

Public meeting attendees were invited to record their name and addresses on lists placed on each table and at the door. As this was a self-selection exercise, the resultant numbers were not truly indicative of the attendance.

Workshop outcomes

- The white and coloured cards were collected. The contents of the coloured cards (summaries) were transcribed for the Commission and placed on the Commission website.
- The large sheets of paper used for reference by nominated representatives of each table were collected for use by the Commissioners.
- The reporting back phase of the workshops was tape-recorded.

Questions from the floor and general discussion was also tape-recorded.

Advertising and publicity of public meetings

A combination of advertising methods and publicity exercises was utilised to inform the public of the meetings on a national and regional basis.

Notification of the Public Meeting programme (and the Commission's consultation process) first appeared in a nationally distributed news release on 21 August 2000. In addition, a four-column by 22 cm advertisement (in English and Maori) was placed in national dailies on the weekend of 2 September 2000. Further details regarding dates, times and location of public meetings were provided in a nationally distributed news release issued on 12 September 2000.

Information regarding the public meetings was also issued on a regional basis using the following methods:

- *Print advertising.* Advertisements, two-column by 12 cm size, were placed in the public notice section of daily and community newspapers in the immediate area an average of eight to nine days prior to the Public Meetings.
- *Radio advertising.* Thirty-second advertisements were placed on regional radio stations to run every 2.5 hours between 6 am and 6 pm, for an average of three to four days, at least three days prior to the Public Meetings.
- *Street posters.* Because of the four-week lull in the programme, 900 street posters were also utilised to advertise the last three Public Meetings. These A3 and A4 posters were placed on street and shopping-complex locations an average of 14 days prior to the Manukau City, Auckland City and Whangarei public meetings.
- *News releases.* News releases announcing upcoming Public Meetings were distributed to regional and national media by fax and email an average of 16 days prior to the meetings.
- *Media liaison.* Secretariat staff contacted local media by telephone an average of two days prior, to arrange media coverage of Public Meetings.
- *Local government liaison.* Local governments were contacted and requested to place A4 posters on local noticeboards and include details of the Commission's Public Meetings in any local government information material.
- *Website.* The Public Meetings schedule was placed on the Commission website and updated regularly. The website also included information on the programme, the consensus card sort process, the workshop questions and a list of "useful links and sources of reference material".
- *Secretariat.* Details regarding the Public Meeting schedule were available from the Commission office. Information kits regarding the Commission were also available on request.

Media coverage

The Public Meetings received considerable coverage in the national and local print and electronic media before and after the events.

A summary of the proceedings

Attendance at the Public Meetings by various groups of people is outlined below.

Attendance at Public Meetings

Centre	Approximate no. of attendees
Invercargill	15
Dunedin	70
Christchurch	140
Greymouth	30
Nelson	140
New Plymouth	30
Palmerston North	70
Wellington	70
Hamilton	110
Rotorua	60
Napier	70
Gisborne	30
Manukau City	80
Auckland City	140
Whangarei	200

Attendance

Participants

Figures for the number of attendees at the 15 Public Meetings are approximate only. Numbers fluctuated during the meeting.

Invited representatives

Local iwi and papatipu representatives. Mihimihi were conducted by the persons shown overleaf.

Local government representatives. The local government representatives shown overleaf were involved in welcoming the Commissioners and Public Meeting attendees, and chairing part of the meeting.

Commissioners

At least three of the four Commissioners attended each public meeting.

Local iwi and papatipu representatives officiating at Public Meetings

Public Meeting	Iwi/papatipu	Kaikorero
Invercargill	Murihiku Marae	
Dunedin	Otakou Marae	Edward Ellison
Christchurch	Nga Hau e Wha	
Greymouth	Te Runanga o Makawhio	Gary Cogland
Nelson	Tainui Kawa	Barnie Thomas
New Plymouth	Taranaki	Lindsay Macleod, Howie Tamati
Palmerston North	Te Kenehi Teira	Sam Bishara
Wellington	Wellington Tenths Trust	Mark Te One, Morven Simon
Hamilton	Tainui	Haare Puke
Rotorua	Tarawa	Pihopa Kingi
Napier	Te Whanganui-a-Rotu Taiwhenua	Heitia Hiha
Gisborne	Turanga nui a Kiwa	Rutene Irwin
Manukau city	Tainui	Morris Wilson
Auckland City	Ngati Whatua	Matt Maihi
Whangarei	Ngati Wai	Albert Saddler

Modifications to workshop programme

Approximately half way through the Public Meeting schedule, workshop participants elected to identify issues themselves rather than use the eight topic headings provided by the Commission, as listed above. This request was accommodated and the programme adjusted so that participants could identify issues they wished to discuss. These were written down on a white board, segregated into areas of commonality and a table designated for each issue, identified by a piece of card.

Local government representatives at the Public Meetings

Public Meeting	Local government	Representative
Invercargill	Invercargill City Council	Mayor Tim Shadbolt
Dunedin	Dunedin City Council	Deputy Mayor Dame Elizabeth Hanan
Christchurch	Christchurch City Council	Deputy Mayor Lesley Keast
Greymouth	Grey District Council	Cr Doug Truman
Nelson	Nelson City Council	Cr Derek Shaw
New Plymouth	New Plymouth District Council	Cr John Andrews
Palmerston North	Palmerston North City Council	Mayor Jill White
Wellington	Wellington City Council	Cr Sue Piper
Hamilton	Hamilton City Council	Cr Alison Miller
Rotorua	Rotorua District Council	Mayor Grahame Hall
Napier	Napier City Council	Mayor Alan Dick
Gisborne	Gisborne District Council	Cr Simon Cave
Manukau City	Manukau City Council	Cr Neil Morrison
Auckland City	Auckland City Council	Cr Richard Northey
Whangārei	Whangārei District Council	Cr Robin Lieffering

In addition, copies of the Commission’s questions were also available to those who requested assistance and prompting with issues they wished to discuss.

The consensus card sort process was also modified during the programme, sometimes to the extent that white cards became ‘scribble pads’ for ideas and that blue and/or green cards were submitted to the Commission as an individual’s statement on genetic modification.