

section 3.7 |



appendix 1

Context and process

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3.7 Youth Forum: the process

Introduction

The Commission sought to consult directly with youth as the outcomes of its inquiry would particularly impact on this group of New Zealanders.

A one-day forum was held at Te Papa Tongarewa (Te Papa, Museum of New Zealand) in Wellington on 5 March 2001 for this purpose. The Youth Forum was one of several consultative programmes used by the Commission during its inquiry and outlined within this volume.

The forum was open to 100 youth (those aged 12 to 25, as defined by the Ministry of Youth Affairs). To encourage national participation in this event, the Commission paid for 20 people, aged 16 to 18, to travel to Wellington to attend the forum. Selection was based on responses to a short essay competition. A total of 99 young people attended the forum.

The forum was tape-recorded and a transcript placed on the Commission website. A summary of the resultant discussion is included in Appendix 3 (see “Youth Forum: summary of outcomes”).

Establishing the forum

In order to meet the Commission objective of consulting with youth in a manner appropriate to their needs and interests, the following aspects were considered: venue, date and time, publicity and advertising, registration, programme of the event, recording the event.

Venue

The Youth Forum venue was chosen on the basis of its geographic centrality and interest to youth. As the national museum of New Zealand, Wellington’s Te Papa also contained historical and cultural material relevant to the genetic modification debate.

Date and time

Monday, 5 March 2001, was selected to accommodate the Commission’s commitments to other consultation programmes. The forum was held between

10 am and 3.30 pm (times chosen to suit participants travelling to and from Wellington by aeroplane).

Publicity and advertising

Information packs containing a covering letter, registration forms and posters were sent to all secondary schools, regional and city councils and Interested Persons on 17 January 2001 advising of the Youth Forum and competition. A news release was also distributed to national, regional, education and youth media on the same day. The Youth Forum received considerable publicity in the print media in the month prior to the forum. Details about the forum and competition were also placed on the Commission website. In addition, 3100 A3-size posters were also placed in 13 regional centres (in cafes, schools, cyber zones, skate shops, record stores and video parlours) from 3 February 2001.

Registration

Because of the size of the venue and to encourage discussion, the number of participants was limited to 100. Youth were requested to register their interest in attending and the first 80 applications received were accepted.

In addition, the Commission conducted a national essay competition to select 20 youth, aged 16 to 18, from outside of Wellington to attend the forum. The Commission paid the transport costs of these 20 young people.

Youth were invited to write 500 words on the topic: “What future does genetic modification have in New Zealand?” Entrants were encouraged to discuss the technology’s medical, agricultural, food, research, cultural, ethical and environmental risks and benefits.

Almost 200 competition entries and attendance registration forms were received by the deadline of 5 pm, 12 February 2001. Letters of acceptance and information packs were sent to the 100 successful applicants and essay winners on 16 February 2001 advising them of the forum programme and containing background information on the Commission and its processes. Information contained in the kit was also placed on the Commission website. A news release detailing the outcome of the registration process was also distributed on that day.

Programme of the event

The Youth Forum programme was designed to maximise the time available and encourage feedback to the Commission regarding young people’s opinions and views on the risks and benefits of utilising genetic modification in New Zealand.

The programme was also designed to reflect the requirements of the participants and was adjusted when needed.

To this end, the majority of the programme incorporated a workshop run by two independent facilitators, experienced in working with youth. The workshop commenced with a role-playing exercise to encourage participants to consider additional points of view on genetic modification, a brainstorming session to identify issues for discussion and a feedback session at its conclusion.

Before starting the workshop, the Commission and its kaumatua and Te Papa's kaihatu welcomed participants to the forum. And at the conclusion of the event, the Commission kaumatua closed the day with a prayer.

Attendees were also given the choice to tour Te Papa or view a video on genetic modification technology. The majority chose to spend 30 minutes on a self-guided tour based on a tour map that asked questions on genetic modification in relation to exhibits on levels 2 and 4 of the museum.

Youth Forum timetable

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|----------|---|
| 10 am | Welcome by Commission |
| 10.15 am | Introduction to programme by facilitator |
| 10.30 am | Tour of Te Papa (optional) |
| 11.10 am | Role-play |
| 11.45 am | Brainstorming to identify topics for discussion in workshop |
| 12 pm | Lunch |
| 12.45 pm | Workshop |
| 1.45 pm | Report back and discussion |
| 3.15 pm | Wrap-up of discussion and farewell |
| 3.30 pm | Conclusion |

Recording the event

All segments of the Youth Forum, excluding the Te Papa tour, were tape-recorded and transcribed. Participants also had the opportunity to write their views on a large ‘graffiti board’ and their workshop discussions itemised on wall charts. Feedback on the forum was also sought and recorded by the facilitators.

Attendance at the event

Competition winners

An independent judge selected 20 winning entries on the basis of the depth of thought and concern about the issues of genetic modification. The Commission paid for winners to travel from Auckland (five), Christchurch (three), Dannevirke (one), Dunedin (two), Hastings (one), Hamilton (two), Napier (one), Pukekohe (one), Taupo (two), Wanganui (one) and Whangarei (one) to attend the forum and have lunch with the Commissioners. The winning essays were posted on the Commission website.

Participants

The average age of participants was 17.3 years. At the time of registration, these participants indicated an interest in discussing (in order of priority) environmental, human health and medicine, future uses, global development, consumer choice, ethical, economic and cultural and spiritual issues at the forum.

The Wellington, Hutt Valley, Kapiti Coast, Wairarapa, Manawatu and Marlborough regions were well represented at the forum. Participants also travelled from Napier, Auckland and Tauranga to attend, at their own expense.

Ninety-nine of the 100 registered participants attended the Youth Forum. The four Commissioners, the Commission kaumatua and two Commission staff were in attendance on the day. Representatives of the print and electronic media also attended.

Assessing the event

In the Commission’s opening address, the Chair outlined the objective of the Youth Forum:

We decided we should have a special opportunity to hear the views of the youth of New Zealand ... the issues involved in the Commission are of importance to all people in New Zealand.

Many people would say that they have a special stake in the debate. The decisions that are ultimately made by Government following our report may impact on their business and may affect it for better or for worse. In some cases, their jobs may be affected, they may have to go overseas to continue the same line of research or work if GM should be banned, for example, so I don't want to say that any section of the community has more to gain or lose than another.

Certainly the youth of this country has an important place in the debate. After all, you will have to live with the outcome for longer than other people, so we decided to have a Youth Day. Today, we would like to find out what particular issues are of importance to you in this debate and what your views are on them, how you feel about them.

The information presented to the Commission was informative yet differed from that presented at other consultative programmes in the priority given to issues. In his concluding remarks, the Chair made the observations:

I think my overwhelming impression of today is that it's been a very well-informed discussion. We've heard many discussions in many different forms over the past six months ... and if I may say so, without trying to flatter you ... you are better informed on the subject than the previous generation is.

... some of the really difficult questions that have popped up you have found difficult too. I suppose, in one sense, that's a comfort to us. The questions that you thought were really important are the ones that have emerged as being important in the wider discussions we have heard.

It's interesting to me that you have actually ranked them in the different order or priority than the previous generation has done, and we'll have to think about that and see what that proves to us.

Participants indicated that they would have liked to have had more time to discuss the issues. However, based on the feedback received by the facilitators, the forum achieved the objective of hearing youth's views on genetic modification.