

MOA POINT

te take, te tiko, te taniwha

WELLINGTON'S Maritime Scheme which looks after, among other things, the disposal of sewage by the various local authorities in the Wellington region, has been labelled inadequate with regard to the inclusion of Maori interests.

Department of Maori Affairs senior planner, George Asher pointed this out when he appeared before the Maritime Planning Authority in Wellington earlier this year. He appeared in support of the objection lodged by the Ministry of Works and Development.

George Asher was employed by the New Zealand Planning Council to facilitate advice on matters relating to Maori social, cultural, economic and land development (1982-85). Before that he had been seconded to the Auckland Regional Authority to assist with the formulation of policy planning matters and the interpretation of requirements affecting Maori people of that region. He had also been employed by the Auckland City Council (1980-82) as a town planner. He has a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Otago and Bachelor of Town Planning degree from Auckland University.

On his Maori side he claims descent through Ngati Tuwharetoa and Ngai Te Rangi.

Statement of evidence

The significance of the marine environment to Maori people generally, and especially to the tangata whenua of any particular area, arises through generations of occupation and utilisation of adjoining land areas and utilisation of the marine resources. The establishment of a balanced relationship with their natural environment, be it land or marine, was essential to their survival. This relationship was slowly evolved by a constant and acute appraisal of the natural environment and maintained by the imposition and compliance to certain cultural controls. Tapu and rahui were the principal means of maintaining this balanced relationship.

Papatuanuku (the Earth Mother) was regarded as the source of all life providing all the basic needs for survival. Maori culture was the medium through which all resources could be respectfully procured from the Earth Mother to service these needs.

The wealth of vocabulary on natural matter, information supported by recent scientific enquiry, and accurate observations of certain natural phenomena strongly suggests that the Maori took a keen interest in acquiring knowledge which would enable greater understanding and control of the natural environment. Acute observation was not only

confined to those matters which had practical utility. A keen aesthetic interest was taken in the environment and every identifiable natural feature signified a historic occasion or important tribal connection. Transmission of these details, enriched with each passing generation, enhanced the value of the natural environment to succeeding descendants.

The natural environment, including the marine environment, therefore provided not only for the basic needs of the Maori but also signified tribal identity and heritage. In the process of its transmission the tribal heritage reinforced the feeling of belonging to the land and substantiated the importance of maintaining established patterns of conduct between individuals and groups (both living and dead) and between the natural environment itself.

Maori economic and social conditions have changed dramatically over the past 150 years.

Circumstances now dictate a different set of considerations in both social and economic relationships between the marine environment and Maori people. While traditional systems of resource management through the imposition of rahui and observation of tapu are still being practiced in some areas, compliance to statutory and other regulatory means cannot be avoided. In most instances, however, this fact has not significantly changed the perspectives that Maori people hold with respect to the marine environment or the importance they attach to traditional marine resources to fulfil certain needs. Regulations in the form of prohibitions and restrictions are not new to the Maori but the reasons for which they are applied and the manner in which they tend to discriminate against long established Maori values and interests has created a great deal of discomfort and even contributed to the relocation of Maori groups away from their traditional ancestral lands.

Because the natural environment (landscape, marinescape and natural resources) was part and parcel of the process of transmission of Maori cultural values, concepts and heritage, restriction or severance of access to this environment and geographical dislocation from it, resulted in severe cultural erosion as well as social and economic disruption. Maritime planning specifically and town planning generally, has

the capacity to provide some relief to Maori people affected prejudicially by historical and political processes which have, in the past, failed to comprehend their predicament and understand their needs.

Maritime planning schemes and Maori interests

There has been a notable variance in the approaches taken by respective authorities in attempts to include Maori values and interests within maritime schemes. It is not surprising, therefore, that, in these preliminary stages at least, there have been significant differences in the depth of treatment and status afforded to such issues. Experience thus far, indicates that a more consistent approach should generally be adopted in the preparation of maritime schemes in respect of Maori values and interests.

Approach to scheme preparation

Four basic but crucial steps may be identified by authorities in the consideration of Maori interests. These include:

- a) Initial and ongoing consultation with affected Maori groups, particularly, but not only the tangata whenua of the area.
- b) Identification of significant perceptions and needs in relation to the total marine environment and resources of the area.
- c) Establishing acceptable grounds for inclusion of Maori values and interests within schemes.
- d) Giving due weight to statements on Maori values and interests contained in schemes.

a) Consultation

The importance of this step needs no explanation in this context. Regardless of whether Maori people currently live in close proximity or not to marine environments under consideration for inclusion in maritime schemes, it is essential that Maori representatives especially the tangata whenua are contacted and invited to respond at the appropriate time. Public notifications for various reasons are an inadequate means of notifying planning intentions to Maori people either still located within the area or who have since relocated elsewhere but retain land or other interests within or in proximity to the area.

Maori representatives may be located through enquiry to the relevant District Maori Council or to any other Maori authority in the area. The district offices and Head Office, of the Department of Maori Affairs are able to assist in identi-