

Memo

20 February 2017

To: Austin Kim, Principal Advisor - Panels
From: Cr Bill Cashmore, Chair - Rural Advisory Panel

Subject: Rural Advisory Panel Feedback

Purpose: To summarise the feedback received from Rural Advisory Panel on the running of the panel over the 2013 - 2016 term.

Key strategic outcomes

The Auckland Plan sets a number of Strategic Directions. Strategic Direction 9 aims to 'keep rural Auckland productive, protected and environmentally sound'. This includes targets to minimise rural subdivision in rural areas, and increase the value rural production adds to Auckland's economy. These two targets connect to two priorities: firstly, to create a sustainable balance between environmental protection, rural production and activities connected to the rural environment; secondly, to support rural settlements, living and communities.

The panel's terms of reference demonstrate its purpose in communicating shared interests between council and the rural sectors to shape strategies, policies, plans, and regulations. The panel also inputs to council submissions on central government policies. It provides diverse views on the real impact of council decisions. This purpose inputs to the Auckland Plan Strategic Direction by informing decisions impacting land use.

Panel achievements

During the 2013-2016 term, the panel has had a number of achievements. It significantly contributed to the Proposed Auckland Unitary Plan (PAUP). Topics it provided advice on include: Rural Urban Boundary, rural zoning and subdivision, water takes and discharges, earthworks and forestry activities, significant ecological areas, farm dairy effluent management, storm water, riparian management, quarry and aggregate management, and rural landscapes. The Panel also contributed to council's submission on the National Policy Statement on Freshwater Management. The panel enriched council's understanding of the rural significance of the Draft Regional Pest Management Plan, rural broadband advocacy, catchment management, including Seachange, infrastructure funding, rating policies, and bylaws.

Auckland Council is often seen as being urban-centric. When seeking feedback, there was consistent comment on the importance of the panel in improving communication and understanding between the rural sector and council.

A success of the panel is improved relationships between council and rural industries. Members value a semi-formal and non-confrontational platform to share their views and learn from both council staff and other industries. It allows meaningful collaborative input on policies that affect communities. One member noted that the panel improves the sector's confidence in council and increases buy-in.

The most notable public achievement was the panel's promotion of the inaugural Auckland Ballance Farm Environment Awards. The Auckland regional winner went on to win the national award. The panel was proud to have assisted in the preparation and promotion of the event, particularly in breaking stereotypes that rural activities and environmental stewardship are mutually exclusive.

Areas for improvement

Feedback from the panel was generally positive.

Agenda content: There was discussion of the timeliness and quantity of information provided. The topics covered are mostly relevant and of interest. There is always an opportunity for additional matters to be raised at the meeting. While other committees and panels receive formal reports in the agendas, this panel does not. Feedback indicated that there is no appetite to formalise the reports, but that more information prior to the meeting would allow for more in depth discussion. The panel would like to receive the presentations that are given at the meeting in the agenda.

Forward work planning: In addition to this, feedback indicated that the panel does not get an opportunity to contribute to significant policies early enough. Panel members would like work to be done towards forward work planning to include significant consultation opportunities and priority issues. This would also assist in following up topics that come to the panel if required.

Membership: Although membership is seen to be suitably diverse, there was concern that some members frequently did not attend and so their views are not captured. It would be worth identifying the reasons for these groups' frequent absence.

Alternative model

Feedback did not suggest an appetite for an alternative model. Almost all feedback was satisfied by the frequency, structure, membership, and content. There was some interest in flexibility for a monthly meeting if priority issues come up.

Key future topics

- Implementation of the Auckland Unitary Plan, and Regional Pest Management Strategy
- Water management (waste water in growth areas, storm water), the implementation of the National Policy Statement on Freshwater Management, and Seachange
- National policies on plantation forestry, transmission activities, biodiversity, and urban development capacity
- Transport and infrastructure for industry and growth areas.

Feedback contributors

- NZ Forest Owners Association
- Western Rural Property Owners
- Federated Farmers
- Dairy NZ
- Rural Women NZ
- Beef and Lamb NZ
- Horticulture NZ
- Rural Contractors NZ and the Aggregate and Quarry Association