

22 February, 2000

**Memorandum to  
The General Manager  
Community Services Manager**

**REPORT TO MONITORING COMMITTEE  
SUBJECT: DISTRICT PUBLIC TOILET STRATEGY**

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*This report discusses issues and provides the Council with a strategy for the future provision of public toilets within the New Plymouth District.*

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**INTRODUCTION**

The New Plymouth District Council Parks and Leisure Services networks are reasonably well catered for with public toilets. The public toilets managed by Parks and Leisure Services include throughout the district, those on central streets, parks and reserves, adjacent to beaches, Council halls and some of those situated on sportsgrounds and sports pavilions.

The provision of toilets has been based on historic use patterns, community demands and the development of the parks and reserves infrastructure. Most of the existing toilets were provided between the 1950s and the 1970s and reflect these eras in style and construction.

With the changing requirements from today's community, the Council has to be responsive to a range of current issues to do with public toilet provision.

The key issues that need addressing are:

1. Provision – how many and where?
2. Accessibility – safety and disabled friendly status of the site and toilet itself.

### 3. Construction – design and aesthetics

This report discusses these issues and provides the Council with a strategy for the future provision of public toilets within the New Plymouth District.

#### **THE RESOURCE**

Parks and Leisure Services provide and maintain fifty five toilet blocks across the District. Most of these cater for both male and female and sixteen are associated with motor camps. All but nine of the toilet blocks are on parks and reserves.

The majority of the toilets are of a concrete block construction and are a basic one or two pan type, plus a urinal.

Most toilets offer a 24hr service while others are locked daily.

All are regularly serviced; some on a daily basis, whilst with others the frequency fluctuates over the seasons from daily to weekly.

Of the street public toilets, three act as restroom facilities and the one at James Lane, New Plymouth, is serviced by an attendant. These offer services primarily for females.

Other toilets associated with key activity areas such as beaches, sportsgrounds and motor camps may offer changing rooms and showers.

#### ***SURVEY A***

*In March 1999, a random survey of 332 District residents had the following outcomes in terms of public toilets.*

- *General satisfaction level was 68%*
- *Request for better signage to toilets*
- *Most frequently used toilets were those associated with beaches and CBDs.*
- *Most commented for improvements in cleaning and appearance.*

*Comments from other users generally can be summarised in the areas of safety, appearance, signage and cleanliness*

## **THE ISSUES**

### **1. Provision**

Demand for extra public toilets has been related to two main factors – provision of a new or upgraded facility or increased public patronage of an area.

The main areas of current and foreseeable demand are in the central business environment and popular coastal sites.

Within New Plymouth the pattern of increased retailing activity at the eastern Devon Street flat area has promoted demand for a facility at this end of town. The Gover Street toilets have provided some service towards meeting this need. Options for location of another toilet block within this retail environment are, however, extremely limited.

The western end of Devon Street has recently been provided with a modern Exeloo facility. However, impacts of opening up the Huatoki Stream and the Puke Ariki project will change the patterns of demand here and need to be captured within the vision of these projects.

Westown Village has recently been refurbished and, particularly with regard to the older population, there seems to be a justifiable demand for a public toilet facility. Options have been investigated for a site which is quite achievable.

Rural town upgrades, particularly of Waitara and Inglewood, are yet to fully examine their needs in this area but, at present, are looking at upgrades or new toilet blocks rather than additional facilities.

One other CBD area that could come up in the future is Bell Block.

In parks and reserves, the Rogan Street Playground at Pukekura Park is one area of constant demand for public toilets. And demand is increasing for a toilet at the Waiwakaiho rivermouth carpark.

Current developments associated with the foreshore, including the satellite links of Kawaroa to East End have highlighted the need for additional public toilets and evaluation of those existing facilities.

With the change of user patterns, particularly in sportsgrounds, rationalisation of some facilities is necessary. In particular, Vogelstown Park, Ranfurly Park, Sanders Park, Pukekohe Domain and Clifton Park are all toilet blocks that are either not currently used or service an extremely limited number of people. Furthermore, a policy under consideration is to only provide toilets on sportsgrounds where a charge is applied.

Again, with the change in community use patterns, other toilets may best be relocated, if possible, or replaced at a more appropriate location on the reserve. An example of this is at Kawaroa Park where children have to cross the road to use the toilet, it is not accessible by the less able and its physical setting is perceived as unsafe by the public.

Pukekura Park is another example with men's and women's main toilet blocks being over one hundred metres apart, are somewhat hidden and are not fully accessible.

In both these cases, provision of new and upgraded facilities will be required.

In summary the Council and community would benefit from a formal understanding of when it has a responsibility for the provision of Public toilets. We are recommending that the Council will continue to provide toilets according to the following criteria and this is provided in policy:

- Main urban central business districts.
- High priority parks and reserves (District and Regional Visitor destinations)
- High priority coastal areas. (Main populated beaches)
- Sportsgrounds that act as Charge grounds( i.e. Can be secured so a admission may be charged)
- Halls and amenity buildings (pavilions, pools, motorcamps)

## **2. Accessibility**

The 1999 Leisure Plan has a specific goal for improved accessibility for all the community to our Parks and Leisure network. One of the strategies from this goal relates to minimising physical barriers for all users.

Accessibility is an issue that affects all of us, not just the less abled. As managers, we need to ask ourselves such questions as, “Do people feel safe in our toilets? Can children reach or use the toilet pans? Are they clean and healthy? Can parents or caregivers have access to change nappies or to help those less able? Can the less abled in the community use our facilities?”

A recent survey, in co-operation with the Taranaki Disability Resource Centre, highlighted the situation of access for the less abled to our toilet facilities. The 1998/99 survey of forty three toilets rated over 65% not accessible and the remaining 35% either accessible or partially accessible [able to be used but not fully compliant with the current Standard]. Of the 65%, over half have the potential to be upgraded to be fully accessible.

In the area of toilets within other buildings particularly halls and pavilions, there are a number of upgrading requirements. Most of these are manageable. However some of the buildings because of their physical location or because they are two story will never be practical to make fully accessible.

To address the accessibility issue to toilet facilities, we must look beyond the facility itself to its site and location and the use of the area. This helps prioritise the task and identify the areas of greatest need.

For example, there is little point in upgrading a toilet facility on a site that is otherwise inaccessible for the less abled and has limited potential for improvements, or a site that is inherently unsafe or hard to locate.

### **3. Construction**

Due to the age of most toilet blocks, their construction is concrete block. They were built to last and provide a basic facility only.

Their construction can make it difficult to upgrade all facilities to be fully accessible. However the recent upgrade of New Plymouths Gover St toilets show what is possible for a minimal outlay. In many cases though they are simply too small and require both interior and exterior major modification to upgrade them.

Comments from the public relate to the darkness of the toilets, the wet or damp environment, the “coldness” of the facilities and the basic level of facilities.

The construction, although basic, has stood up to vandalism, which is a problem with facilities such as these. The toilets are subjected to fire, smashing of walls, doors or other wooden structures, breaking of the toilet pans, toilet roll holders and such like and other abuses such as graffiti. As a result for example most urban toilets have stainless steel pans to counter vandalism.

What we need therefore is a toilet of robust construction, easy to keep clean and inviting, having adequate light and providing the basic modern facilities.

We intend to upgrade, where possible, as we have done in the New Plymouth CBD. Where this is not possible, such as in Kawaroa Park, we are designing a standard construction for new toilets that will comply with all the modern requirements and offer, in a practical way, a quality service.

New features such as hand dryers, changing tables, automatic paper feeders, etc. will be used where practical.

## **FORWARD STRATEGY**

The strategy for future public toilet provision can be summarised as follows:

1. Review the need for all existing toilet blocks on reserves with the following immediate action undertaken

- a. Decommission and/or demolish and do not replace toilet blocks at Ranfurly Park, Pukekohe Domain, Vogeltown and Sanders Park;
  - b. Review Clifton Park toilets with a view to encouraging their management by the netball/tennis clubs and Waitara High School.
2. Initiate a major upgrade programme according to the following priorities:
- a. New Plymouth CBD – 90% completed
  - b. Kawaroa Park
  - c. General upgrade of all toilets to make them more accessible ( modifications identified by Barrier Free Survey)
  - d. Pukekura Park
  - e. District CBD area – Westown.
  - f. Tasman Parade – Oakura Beach
  - g. Coastal toilets upgrade – Fitzroy, East End, Marine Park
  - h. Lake Mangamahoe and Burgess Park
  - i. Rogan Street Playground – Pukekura Park
  - j. General toilets upgrades- (e.g Oakura/Okato CBD's
  - k. Ngamotu Beach
3. Consider, with the community, the provision of new toilet facilities according to the following priorities:
- a. Westown CBD [partnership on private land]
  - b. Rogan Street Playground, Pukekura Park
  - c. Pukekura Park
  - d. East End Reserve [consider as part of Development Plan]
  - e. Bell Block CBD [consider as part of Village Development Plan]
  - f. Waiwakaiho rivermouth
  - g. Fitzroy Village CBD [replace existing]
  - h. Back Beach, Paritutu Centennial Park
4. Recommend to CBD development teams as follows:

- a. New Plymouth Urban Design Group – consideration for new modern facility associated with James Lane/Huatoki Stream area
- b. Inglewood Urban Design Group – consideration for new facility to replace existing one on Matai Street to modernise and provide full accessibility for all
- c. Waitara Urban Design Group – consideration for new facility to replace Waitara Men’s and Waitara Restrooms to modernise and provide full accessibility for all

5. Review and upgrade all signage to and within the toilet facilities

### FINANCIAL PLAN

The following provisional programme is included in the Parks and Leisure Services LTFS. This is additional to normal maintenance items of painting and repairs.

YEAR	ITEM	FUNDING
2000	Kawaroa Park new toilets	\$60,000
2000	General Toilets Upgrade – Accessibility and Signage ( includes toilets in other buildings as well as stand alone facilities)	\$45,000
2001	Pukekura Park Upgrade	\$50,000
2002	District CBD Toilet Upgrades – Westown	\$75,000
2002	Oakura Beach – New Toilet and shower/changing rooms	\$60,000
2003	New Plymouth CBD Toilet – Stage 2 upgrade	\$65,000
2003	Lake Mangamahoe – Upgrade	\$40,000
2003	Pukekura Park – New Toilet Rogan Street	\$60,000
2005	Reserves Upgrade General	\$50,000
2006	Ngamotu Beach Toilets – New	\$70,000
2007	New District Toilets- Waiwakaiho Rivermouth etc	\$75,000
2008	Pennington Park– Toilets	\$40,000



## **Recommendation**

That the report of the Parks and Leisure Development Manager on upgrading public toilets be received and that:

1. the following recommendations be made to CBD development teams.
  - a. New Plymouth Urban Design Group – consideration for new modern facility associated with James Lane/Huatoki Stream area
  - b. Inglewood Urban Design Group – consideration for new facility to replace existing one on Matai Street to modernise and provide full accessibility for all
  - c. Waitara Urban Design Group – consideration for new facility to replace Waitara Men’s and Waitara Restrooms to modernise and provide full accessibility for all
2. the Forward Financial Plan be accepted and received annually as required.
3. as a matter of policy the Council will only provide public toilets in urban CBD areas, high priority Parks and Reserves, high priority Beaches, within public halls and public amenity buildings and on Charge Sportsgrounds.

**A.G.JOINES**  
**PARKS AND LEISURE SERVICES DEVELOPMENT MANAGER**  
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