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November 2009



An assortment of Hastings Councillors

Rating the Councils

By Tom Belford

I attend heaps of Council meetings – Hastings, Napier, and Regional... probably more than any individual in Hawke's Bay. It's part of my "job" as editor of **BayBuzz**. I've formed some definite impressions of the differing styles and modes of operation of these august bodies. And if you're a reader of the daily BayBuzz blog, by now you probably have a pretty good sense of my appraisal, including my pet peeves and biases.

Such as ...

Nothing of any consequence whatsoever ever happens at a Napier City Council meeting. The only reason to go to a NCC meeting is to see if anyone has died. Decisions that are truly important regarding the future of Napier are made somewhere else... I think at Mayor

Barbara Arnott's kitchen table.

Perhaps this is entirely fitting. Mayor Arnott was re-elected with 84% of the vote ... the rest of the Councillors are just window dressing. For Napier ratepayers, "amalgamation" should just be a matter of reducing the size of the royal court. OK, Barbara can't attend every civic function, so maybe they need a Vice Mayor too.

Just about everyone in Napier seems quite content with this queenly governance, as you will see from our latest BayBuzz survey.

At the other end of the spectrum lies the Hastings District Council. In its chamber, issues large and small are debated, which isn't to say most outcomes aren't pre-determined ...

Spending

Our survey asked readers which statement about Councils' rate and debt increases best represented their view (Note: space limitations prevented asking with respect to HBRC).

	Hastings	Napier
I think these increases have been appropriate and pay for necessary services and infrastructure	22%	71%
I believe these increases have been excessive and the Council is trying to do too many things	78%	29%

It beggars belief that for some reason only "malcontents" responded from Hastings, while only "devotees" responded from Napier. By any reading, Hastings Councillors have a problem with their ratepayers when it comes to spending!

Do They Listen?

Our survey asked readers which of three answers best reflected their view as to whether Councillors "listen to and represent the interests of average residents."

	Hastings	Regional	Napier
Yes, I believe by and large they do reflect the interests of average residents	14%	27%	40%
No, I think they mostly pursue their own ideas and priorities	78%	56%	48%
I'm not sure	8%	17%	12%

I wouldn't say *any* Council should celebrate this response. But again, it would seem Hastings Council stands apart in terms of the degree to which its Mayor and Councillors are perceived to be pursuing their own agenda.

Time for a Change?

Our survey asked readers which of three answers best describes how they felt about the job the various Councils were doing (Note: Respondents rated either Hastings or Napier; all rated the Regional Council):

	Hastings	Regional	Napier
I'm not satisfied, it's time for a change	62%	40%	33%
I have some concerns, but by and large the Council is doing an acceptable job	30%	50%	42%
I'm satisfied, the Council is doing a good job	8%	10%	25%

Again Napier comes out the winner, with the Regional Council not too far behind.

if not by prior private "workshops" then by the reality that, at best, only five or six Councillors at any time (out of fourteen) are inclined to swim against the tide.

But at least one can usually expect something entertaining to happen. You never know what piece of minutia might confound the machinery of Hastings government. As I often note on the blog, Iron Rule #1 in Hastings is that debate is inversely proportionate to the seriousness of the subject matter. Councillors can intently deliberate for a half-hour or more over the duration of parking limits for a half dozen carparks, with all Councillors voicing an opinion, then adopt an industrial development policy in mere moments, with nary a question.

The Regional Council lies somewhere in between. Unlike Napier, important issues indeed come to the table for debate. Unlike Hastings, there is no "voting block" bigger than two (and that changes minute by minute) to help sharpen the issues and choices under review in any systematic way. The result is an entertaining degree of unpredictability and inconsistency.

Yes, most of the Councillors have a pet theme – Gilbertson: "Let's give our hoard of money back to the ratepayers." McGregor: "I'm sick of seeing farmers getting a bad rap." Remmerswaal: "What about sustainability?" Scott and von Dadelzen: "Point of order, Mr Chairman." But this is not the stuff that would electrify most ratepayers.

I'm sharing my impressions of the Councils as a preface to reporting on our latest Council Report Card survey. The results of the survey are equally impressionistic and unscientific. Some of you responded to the printed survey in last month's **BayBuzz Digest** (distributed randomly to 10,000 homes); some took the survey online (arguably an audience more populated with the Baybuzz "faithful"). Respondents rated either Hastings or Napier as their local Council; all respondents rated the Regional Council.

One can always argue over whether "malcontents" are more likely to offer their opinions than "devotees" of the current regimes. That said, there is a very clear pattern to our Report Card, and one that mirrors all the encounters and feedback I have or receive on literally a daily basis wearing my BayBuzz hat.

The bottomline: People are very upset about the direction of the Hastings Council ... quite satisfied with the direction of the Napier Council ... and the Regional Council falls somewhere in the middle.

It seems to me that Mayor Yule and Hastings Councillors have two choices. One, they can dismiss the BayBuzz survey as unrepresentative, biased, appealing to whingers, a worst-case scenario, and so forth. They can console themselves by seeking reassurance from their close friends and associates, who will confirm that indeed they're doing a dandy job after all ... not to worry.

Or two, they can listen to the early warning signs and take some actions that indicate they care about the mood and priorities of their constituents... starting with a different approach to transparency, "big ticket" spending and fiscal accountability.

READ ON...

Raewyn Peart p3

FROM GOOD TO SCARY

It's still hard to discern where the National-led government is heading on environmental matters. Over recent months, it's ranged from good to rather scary. So one year into its term, let's have a considered look at its performance.

Tom Belford p3

UNFULFILLED PROMISE

I view the National Government with mixed emotions when it comes to their environmental record one year in. On the one hand, on occasion John Key, Nick Smith or the "Bluegreen" element of the National Party get the rhetoric right.

Chris Tremain & Craig Foss p4

OUR ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRESS SO FAR

Throughout our first year in office the National-led Government has worked hard to provide real leadership on environmental issues that our country and the Bay needed so badly. We've moved to implement a raft of policies that marry sound economics with the protection of our environment.

Stuart Nash p5

FIGHTING FOR THE RIGHT CHOICES

In the past six months, environmentalists have observed with increasing disquiet a range of announcements from the Government that threaten damaging consequences for the environment.

Russel Norman & p5

Metiria Turei NOT LIVING UP TO THE RHETORIC

It's not all bad, but it certainly comes nowhere close to living up to the rhetoric. Fundamentally, we think this Government is failing to understand that taking care of the environment goes hand-in-hand with taking care of the economy and society.

Tim Gilbertson p6

AND IN CELL NO. 4

The Regional Council is sitting on 150 million dollars in cash which they refuse to return to their rightful owners, the ratepayers, in their time of desperate need.

Roy Dunningham p7

SEEN THIS CENTURY

Seen This Century opens on 7th November and, for anyone seriously interested in contemporary art, this is essential viewing.

Brendan Webb p8

CATCHING A WAVE

He tried not to think about the ops room being below sea level, just two tar-sealed blocks from the foreshore.

FROM THE EDITOR



Tom Belford

You're probably dismayed to see Baybuzz already writing about next year's local body elections. But what can I say... local Councils are our primary beat! At this point, I'd say that change is in the wind. Certainly with respect to the Hastings crew.

With Mayor Yule having launched his campaign, with a flash new blog, a featured smile on the Hastings Council homepage, and a regular minute-by-minute report on his doings around the district (ostensibly to keep Councillors informed, of course), the coming year will be heaps of fun for political groupies.

And if he cuts enough ribbons between now and October 2010 – grandstands, netball courts, water mains, new Council building (I'd downplay that one, Lawrence), carparks, public toilets, and maybe even an urban park or two – the Mayor will be a formidable candidate, whatever the Hastings debt level.

But he can't hold a candle to John Key. At year one of his dominion, the Prime Minister has managed to maintain soaring popularity. Barack Obama should be so fortunate! As Colin James writes in the Press in his "first anniversary" assessment: "A year ago Helen Clark's government was in its death throes, a week away from election defeat. John Key was on a roll. He still is. Key is set to roll over the top of Phil Goff in 2011."

We thought it fitting to invite some "Year One" assessments of the Key regime. But the policy canvas of national government is too broad for BayBuzz to tackle, so we've focused just on the environmental track record of National. After all, that's one of the three E's promised as National's top priorities (Environment, Education, Economy).

Indeed, some would say the environment and the economy are indivisible, and that National doesn't really "get" that reality. This is the tack of Labour MP Stuart Nash in his BayBuzz Digest critique of National's environmental

performance. And it's echoed by Green Party Co-leaders Russel Norman and Metiria Turei in their assessment. Reading between the lines, one gets the impression that these out-of-power critics are actually relieved... they feared much worse out of National.

But again I think Colin James nails it when he comments that the first reason for Key's advantage is his personality... "He engages. He doesn't hate." Describing a potential confrontation with Unionists recently, James observes: "(Key) fronted hostile questions in a friendly but firm manner. He didn't exactly seduce them but he gave them no grounds to entrench bitterness." If John Key came to a meeting of Hawke's Bay environmentalists, I suspect he would have the same effect.

We also asked Raewyn Peart at the Environmental Defence Society (for my money, the thinking person's national environmental organization) to have a go at the Nat's enviro performance. Her verdict: "It's ranged from good to rather scary."

And I offer my own opinion. As I see it, National, like any mainstream party, should be assumed to have a caucus that includes people seriously concerned about the environment and people who don't give a rat's arse. Where the balance falls is the key... and in this case, that literally hinges on THE Key! I think he still falls into the false "environment versus economy" trap too often, and he's not attentive enough to some of the environmental damage the barbarians in his party might wreak.

Naturally we give our local team, National's Craig Foss and Chris Tremain, their opportunity to set us straight!

All this sounds pretty heavy, so we've included columns from our irreverent observers of the local scene... Brendan Webb on tsunami alerts and Tim Gilbertson who once again wonders why no one takes him seriously.

Enjoy!

Issue Updates



More Demand for Bus Service

Over 40,000 trips are now being made monthly on the goBay public bus network in Napier and Hastings. This increased usage has led to more requests for increased services, and the Regional Council is expanding and adjusting services – routes, timing and frequency – where it can best meet passenger demand.

"The increased demand may be an effect of the recession, but is also a result of improved buses, routes that are useful, and a greater awareness of the value of traveling by bus. The Saturday service between Hastings and Napier is perhaps the best example, as it has become so popular that it will be increased to an hourly service," said Alan Dick, Chairman of the Regional Council.

All changes will take effect from Saturday 14 November. The Regional Council is updating timetable booklets and timetable posters. In the meantime, goBay drivers will be distributing information to passengers, and posters will be displayed on the buses. Passengers can get also details of service improvements at www.hbrc.govt.nz or by phoning **Go Bus on 878 9250**.

"Everything Under the Sun"

That's the tagline for Venture Hawke's Bay's new campaign promoting tourism to the Bay. Go to this URL: www.everythingunderthesun.com and you can see how TV advertising focused on the Wellington market aims to attract vacationing families to our region. Take a look at the animated commercial and tell BayBuzz what you think.

I really like this tagline. It captures the broad appeal of Hawke's Bay, which is plenty more than wine, after all (no offence intended to my wine biz friends).

Here's what Michael Wan, VHB's marketing guy, says: "The campaign tagline 'Everything Under the Sun' was developed as part of a long term strategy. It is our intention to not only use it throughout this 12 month campaign programme (both phases) but to evolve it over the next 3 years. It was designed in such a way that we are able to leverage it across the other sectors we're involved in – events, conferences, and even business. It is in no way designed to replace the Hawke's Bay Wine Country brand. It works alongside this in a complementary way."

Hmmm... I'm not so sure about that. Given the intense politics around local branding around here, I guess we'll need to get used to the confusion having both a "brand" (Wine Country) and a "tagline" (Everything Under the Sun).

In any event, Venture Hawke's Bay has put the first installment of a \$200,000 domestic marketing campaign on the table, plus a re-designed 2010 Visitor Guide and a new Hawke's Bay website at www.hawkesbaynz.com. Good on them.

Call your Wellington friends and ask if they've seen the TV spot. We'll soon see if

the campaign gains any traction. Count on BayBuzz to follow-up.

Chamber Pushes Amalgamation

The HB Chamber of Commerce has been lobbying our local body chiefs for speedier consideration of amalgamation. But local leaders are sticking to their original game plan... amalgamation won't go on the table until after the 2010 local body elections.

As far as BayBuzz is concerned, that's just fine. Our Councils are making important decisions day in and day out – Heretaunga Plains development, funding major building projects, getting sewage systems to work, developing water policy... to name a few – that have greater urgency and require all the attention we can give them. As voters in 2010, we'll be more likely to evaluate the performance of our Councillors on the basis of their handling of these issues... not their paper positions on amalgamation.

According to the BayBuzz survey reported on page one, 61% of Hastings respondents support amalgamation (with no particular plan specified), while only 25% of Napier respondents do... no surprise there. And virtually no change from the last referendum.

Healthy Air Planning Progresses

Fine particulates in the air (PM10) – in this region mostly (by far) from woodburners – are extremely dangerous to our health. The National Government has confirmed the judgment of its predecessor on this matter

The Regional Council's Hearings Committee just completed considering submissions on its proposed remedies for the problem, even as they pray that Government will extend the Bay's compliance deadline for reducing PM10 emissions until 2020.

At this point, there's a logistical case for postponing the deadline beyond the current 2013... an unfortunate necessity brought about by the Regional Council's inaction on a problem it was first alerted to six years ago. Assuming the delay is granted (we'll know around February 2010), the human costs in terms of ill health, loss of workdays and productivity, and loss of school attendance, fall squarely on the shoulders of the HBRC.

As the District Health Board points out in its belated Health Impact Assessment on the matter, the poorest families in Hastings and Napier bear the brunt of PM10 pollution. Maori in particular will suffer from the seven year delay.

Make no mistake, Government will require compliance with the healthy air standard, and the money required to achieve clean air will need to be spent. Hopefully, the Regional Council's plan to subsidize conversion to clean heat will get financial relief to the poor families who need it most.

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Raewyn Peart
Environmental Defence Society



From Good to Scary

It's still hard to discern where the National-led government is heading on environmental matters. Over recent months, it's ranged from good to rather scary. So one year into its term, let's have a considered look at its performance.

First, the good initiatives.

The government has backed the Land and Water Forum. This is an innovative exercise in collaborative governance. It involves bringing representatives of key stakeholder groups together in a year-long exercise to develop a better way of managing our water resources.

While we are water-abundant compared with most countries, in some regions demand for irrigation outstrips availability. In other regions, we have serious water quality issues, largely because of pollution from intensive land use.

It is to the government's credit that the Ministers for the Environment and Agriculture have both prioritised developing this new approach to managing freshwater.

Another initiative by the Minister for the Environment, Nick Smith, has been the reform of the Resource Management Act. What can be said about that is that the outcome is not as bad as it might have been. To his credit, the Minister listened to concerns from business and from community and environmental groups and wound back some of the more radical recommendations from his Technical Advisory Group. A second phase of reform is now underway and we expect that the government will take more time and adopt a more consultative approach this time round. The Minister has promised that the underlying principles of the RMA will not be touched.

The creation of an Environmental Protection Authority is definitely a feather in the Environment Minister's cap. The EPA will initially handle major infrastructure projects that are "called in" for priority consenting. However in the next phase of reform, we can expect the role of the EPA to be fleshed out further. Between a slimmed-down Ministry for the Environment (focusing on policy advice) and the EPA (focusing on providing national oversight of environmental administration), we can expect more central government leadership and direction-setting on environmental management.

An area that has been disappointing, however, is the emissions trading scheme. The good thing is that the government has stuck to an ETS as its foundation climate change policy and resisted pressure from its coalition partner to abandon it.

However as the amendment bill is presently drafted, it is a cap-and-trade scheme without a cap – and that won't work. The whole point of an ETS is to give clear price signals to investors that low-carbon developments are favoured over high carbon ones. But by providing massive taxpayer subsidies to heavy polluters and agriculture through to 2050 and beyond, those price signals are weak and won't change investment behaviour. And rather than achieving bipartisan support for the ETS, as they have managed to do for example in the United Kingdom, it looks like ETS will remain a political football for years to come with a resulting lack of certainty for business.

At the "scary" end of the spectrum are proposals led by the Minister of Energy, Gerry Brownlee. Mr Brownlee has kicked off a review of Schedule 4 of the Crown Minerals Act which currently puts highly valued parts of the Conservation estate off-limits to mining. These areas include National Parks, Scientific and Ecological Reserves and Marine Reserves. The intention of the Minister appears to be to open some of these areas up for mining. This has the potential to turn into a major controversy for the government during 2010 and we have seen Prime Minister John Key intervene to hose down community concerns.

Coastal development is another issue where the jury is still out on government performance. As comprehensively argued in my recently published book *Castles in the Sand: What's happening to New Zealand's coast?* (Craig Potton Publishing, 2009), the coast remains under a great deal of pressure. Areas that should never be developed remain under threat and many developments that are approved are second-rate. The board of inquiry's report on the revised National Coastal Policy Statement, the key document that could provide greater central government direction on coastal management, has been completed, but so far the Minister of Conservation has refused to release it, let alone indicate whether government will adopt it.

Beyond the coast lies our territorial sea and Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). Taken together these cover 14 times the land area of New Zealand. It is an area extremely rich in biodiversity: many of our rarest birds and marine mammals are found there. Caring for them is something that we need to do better. The Minister of Conservation has so far been relatively silent on how to achieve that, but a review of the law is clearly required.

Important to the government's environmental performance are the Bluegreens, a ginger group of National caucus members and party activists. The Bluegreens have articulated a positive 'green' vision for the future, which has largely found its way into National Party policy. However their influence with the full range of government ministers needs to grow and they need to do more thinking about how, for example, we can green our economy and improve our environmental performance. The Bluegreens need to drive a more consistent approach on environmental management across the whole of government.

So looking ahead into Year Two of this administration, it's clear that there are even bigger reforms in prospect. These include the expansion of the role of the EPA, further changes to the RMA, the creation of an environmental management regime in our largely unregulated Exclusive Economic Zone (which will come under pressure from deep sea mining), and changes to the management of aquaculture. They will be examined in some detail at the Environmental Defence Society's national conference in June 2010.

Raewyn Peart
Senior Policy Analyst
www.eds.org.nz

Unfulfilled Promise

By Tom Belford

Like Raewyn Peart in her adjoining Guest Buzzmaker column, I view the National Government with mixed emotions when it comes to their environmental record one year in.

On the one hand, on occasion John Key, Nick Smith or the "Bluegreen" element of the National Party get the rhetoric right. For example, I have no quarrel with these five principles as proffered by the Bluegreens:

- Resource use must be based on sustainability;
- Economic growth and improving the environment can and must go hand in hand;
- Good science is essential to quality environmental decision making;
- People respond best to change when engaged and given incentives;
- New Zealanders have a unique birthright to access and enjoy our special places.

But the problem with business-driven parties is that when push comes to shove, they just can't quite manage to deliver on the rhetoric. What starts as "economic growth and improving the environment can and must go hand in hand" seems inevitably to morph into "improving the environment must be subservient to economic priorities."

Somehow, the likes of John Key and Bill English just can't seem to truly comprehend that "green" can be an economy driver, as opposed to an occasionally affordable luxury indulgence. Yet it's as plain as the nose on your face – the millionaires and billionaires of this century will be the innovators and entrepreneurs who bring us a non-carbon-based economy.

Even when John Key and Nick Smith are "on message," there's the problem of differing

degrees of "enlightenment" within the National Party. For example, while the Bluegreens are talking about Kiwis' "birthright to access and enjoy our special places," Energy Minister Brownlee is exploring mining in National Parks and Ecological Reserves. And lest Brownlee be seen as a Cabinet outlier ...

At a briefing I attended right here in Hawke's Bay, Finance Minister Bill English volunteered a comment to the effect that New Zealand's economic prosperity is being held back by our refusal – so far – to exploit the vast mineral wealth contained beneath our conservation lands. And why is this wealth – rivaling that of Australia, he noted – being denied the nation? Because of a few members of Greenpeace!

There's so much wrong with that statement I scarcely know where to begin.

First, one might hold out hope that our Tourism Minister, John Key, sees a huge and – if we stand by it – everlasting commercial value in our conservation lands and the natural splendor they protect. Set aside, if you must, ethics, legacy to our grandchildren, biological diversity and sappy stuff like that. Those protected lands are the primary reason most foreign tourists come to New Zealand, for god's sake!

Tourism Industry Association chief executive Tim Cossar said: "Taking a long-term view, it may be that tourism is a more valuable and sustainable industry to New Zealand's economy than mining." NZ tourism is a \$20 billion per year industry, while our mineral potential is estimated at about \$140 billion, 70% of which would involve conservation land.

Continued Page 6

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National MPs**



Our Environmental Progress So Far

New Zealand's environment is at the core of our quality of life, our national identity, and our competitive advantage. From Lake Waikaremoana to the Ruahine Ranges, there is little doubt that Hawke's Bay enjoys some of New Zealand's most pristine and accessible natural beauty.

People from all over the world don't just visit the region for our farms, orchards and vineyards, but come for our walks, our beaches, and our views. Good environmental practice is not only important to protect our natural heritage, but is crucial in lifting our nation's game and securing the sort of future we want for our children.

That's why throughout our first year in office the National-led Government has worked hard to provide real leadership on environmental issues that our country and the Bay needed so badly. We've moved to implement a raft of policies that marry sound economics with the protection of our environment.

We set out eight clear environmental priorities: climate change, freshwater management, biodiversity protection, oceans, air quality, outdoor recreation, waste management and contaminated site clean-ups.

On 1 October, we established the New Zealand Environmental Protection Agency. This new agency will be the vehicle for providing clearer central Government leadership around many of the environmental issues facing Hawke's Bay.

We've put into practice programmes that will actually deliver for Hawke's Bay.

The most significant of these programmes is the \$323 million "Warm Up New Zealand: Heat Smart" initiative. This scheme is already proving very popular with more than 1,153 homes in the Hawke's Bay region insulated

in the first three months since its launch in July. Already it's improving energy efficiency, reducing the cost of energy for households and increasing the value of Hawke's Bay homes. Best of all, it is providing much needed jobs in our communities.

Another new programme of work is the fresh start for freshwater.

Here in Hawke's Bay, we have seen first hand the problems of deteriorating water quality in areas of intensive agriculture. We've experienced the poor system of allocating water rights, and have seen the opportunities for storage and water augmentation lost because of poor public policy.

We know firsthand the value of water. Freshwater is to New Zealand, what minerals are to Australia. The good news is that freshwater, unlike their mines, if properly managed, will not run out.

National has not only recognised freshwater management as one of New Zealand's big environmental challenges, but we've also set out an ambitious framework for driving reform in this all important area. Improving the water quality in rivers such as the Tuki Tuki and Mohaka are central to these reforms.

A further new initiative is around biofuels. National believes biofuels can play a part in the solution to renewable fuels. That's why we've invested \$36 million into a biodiesel grants programme, promoting biodiesel production to kick start the biofuels industry.

We've also passed legislation that exempts electric vehicles from road user charges to encourage their uptake. Electric cars have huge environmental benefits in that they are far more energy efficient and quieter than conventional vehicles, and can significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions. These new



Government policies for biofuels and electric cars provide a refreshing approach to new energy technologies.

Our New Zealand Cycleway Project, championed by Prime Minister John Key, will benefit both the economy and the environment by kick-starting local economies while protecting our natural landscape. We've seen huge growth in cycle tourism all over the world. This initiative will help create a high-quality tourism asset that will help attract higher-value cycle tourists and complement our "100% Pure" brand.

We all look in admiration at the success of the Otago Railtrail. There is no reason Hawke's Bay can't have similar success. We're working together with local organisations to propose a Hawke's Bay Cycleway Journey. We're keen to see Hawke's Bay with an iconic Cycleway Journey, with the hope that it will be included in the next round of allocations for the National Cycleway project.

Hawke's Bay's striking landscapes mean it has considerable untapped potential for tourism, both domestic and international. We believe that a journey of this nature would promote a range of small businesses, especially accommodation clusters along the route. The New Zealand Cycleway will not only preserve New Zealand's diverse environment, but will encourage Kiwis and visitors alike to explore and enjoy it.

Within our first year in office, there are two very substantive reforms that the Government has been involved in.

The first of those is the biggest package of reforms to the Resource Management Act since it became law in 1991. These reforms address the delays, costs and uncertainties of the Act without undermining its overall environmental integrity. The new legislation that came into effect on 1 October makes a number of significant changes. Our reforms are about pulling back on expensive and unnecessary bureaucracy. They reinforce National's Bluegreen message that being pro-environment does not equate to being pro-red tape.

The other major package is the critical issue of climate change.

This Government's approach is about New Zealand doing its fair share and protecting our clean green reputation. But we're also realistic about the costs, the impacts on jobs and what a small country like New Zealand can do.

The first challenge we've faced as a Government in climate change is setting a 2020 emissions target as we move towards the Copenhagen conference in December. We've set an ambitious target to cut emissions 10-20 per cent below 1990 levels by 2020.

We've put a power of work over the last few months into making the New Zealand Emissions Trading Scheme workable and affordable. The ETS we're proposing will halve the electricity and fuel price increases that Labour was planning, and it will save thousands of jobs.

Labour presided over record deforestation, and a growing emissions profile – our gross emissions are already 24 per cent above 1990 levels. We have had to start our efforts behind the eight ball during an economic downturn.

But we're committed to doing our part. The changes ensure we don't destroy peoples' jobs and the backbone of our economy by jeopardising the key industries of agriculture and fisheries. They defer agriculture to the more realistic timetable of 2015 and improve the transitional support for the fishing industry.

National remains committed to pursuing sound, practical environment policies to achieve emission reduction. We want to reduce emissions in ways that result in the least cost to society and the economy.

National believes that New Zealand, as a responsible international citizen, and as a country that values our clean, green environment, must act to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions.

We're proud of our environmental initiatives so far.

But the work is not finished.

We have an ambitious agenda and you will see more environmental policies rolled out in the coming years. Our environment is just too important for us to rest on our laurels.

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Fighting for the Right Choices

It seems in the National Party there is still a mindset of the economy versus the environment. Bill English might have put it more bluntly, but John Key is guilty of saying that National's policy is about "maximising economic opportunities while protecting the environment."

Notwithstanding the obvious contradiction in terms of National's actions, it is not just about protection, it should be about integration. For our country, the two have to be seen together as part of a sustainable future.

In the lead-up to the election, John Key said National's top three priorities were the three E's - environment, education and the economy. On the campaign trail, when Opposition leader, he showed great enthusiasm for the first topic, lifting hopes among environmental groups that National had turned over a new, green leaf.

"Environmental issues should not be monopolised by those on the left of the political spectrum. Environmentalism should be a mainstream issue for all New Zealanders and all political parties," Nick Smith said at the launch of his party's "Bluegreen" policy. Interestingly, Nick Smith chose Hawke's Bay as the ideal place to launch this document before an audience of around 100, interested to see what National's plans were for our environment. Such words were welcomed by Forest & Bird and the other environmental groups present.

But, as Mr Key said at the time, "we should always measure a government's environmental rhetoric against its environmental record."

In the past six months, environmentalists have observed with increasing disquiet a range of announcements from the Government that threaten damaging consequences for the environment. For example, Mr Key's pre-election promises on climate change have not been followed through by his actions in Government.

"National will have policies that reflect the fact that living on a diet of carbon will be increasingly bad - bad for the world and bad for our economy. We will have policy that encourages 'climate friendly' choices like windmills, hydro power and tree planting, and reduces the desire for 'climate unfriendly' behaviours, like burning coal," Mr Key promised in May 2007.

National's emissions trading scheme has been watered down now so that big emitters - agriculture and industry - benefit from delayed introduction to the scheme, while taxpayers pick up the bill for their emissions.

This won't help New Zealand achieve a fair contribution towards the 40 per cent reduction in greenhouse gases, which the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has identified as the level of reduction in emissions that must be achieved by developed countries, if we are to avoid the worst impacts of climate change. Environment Minister Nick Smith says 40 per cent is unrealistic.

In August, Energy Minister Gerry Brownlee announced plans to mine New Zealand's conservation estate, including its national parks. Exploitation of fossil fuels from beneath native forests is at odds with New Zealand's

"100% Pure" brand, which underpins our \$20 billion tourism industry.

And it is out of kilter with Mr Key's pre-election view that: "Any political party with an eye to New Zealand's future success must pursue policies that protect and promote our environmental assets. Our environment is also an asset that differentiates New Zealand's products."

MEANWHILE, Agriculture Minister David Carter and Lands Minister Maurice Williamson were scoping the South Island high country. They rescinded measures introduced by Labour to protect the landscapes around high-country lakes from inappropriate development and subdivision. They also effectively spelled an end to the creation of new high-country conservation parks.

Transport Minister Steven Joyce scrapped a scheme that would have penalised imported vehicles producing high emissions. That didn't fit well with Mr Key's pre-election statement that: "National will provide Kiwis with good signals about the cars that are the best for the environment. We will do this by ensuring our emission and noise standards for new vehicles keep up with international standards and practices and by introducing more sophisticated emissions and noise testing for existing vehicles. If Kiwis have a highly polluting or excessively noisy car, we think they should know about it and have an incentive to do something about it."

Mr Key also promised before the election that he would embrace environmental organisations - and indeed would "turbo-charge" the work of community groups such as Forest & Bird. In theory, the idea of linking the trade and conservation portfolios under one minister was an interesting choice, but in practice Conservation Minister Tim Groser spends so much time overseas pursuing his trade portfolio interests that he has little time for meeting with conservationists back home.

Labour will not give up fighting for the right choices for our environment - the stakes are too high.

If you want to talk about this, or any other issue with me, please give me a call in my Napier office on 835 7428.



Russel Norman & Metiria Turei,
Green Party Co-leaders



Not Living Up to the Rhetoric

"We should always measure a government's environmental rhetoric against its environmental record," said John Key on the campaign trail last year.

We agree. So how does his Government's environmental record stack up after one year in office?

Sadly, a quick look at action (and inaction) on key environmental issues reveals that the Government's environmental record so far comes nowhere close to living up to the "blue-green" rhetoric. Here are some examples we think are important.

Climate change

Climate change is the greatest global challenge facing our generation.

New Zealand was beginning to show leadership on this huge issue, but the new Government has turned this on its head.

We now have a weak reduction target to take to December's international negotiations in Copenhagen. We have an Emissions Trading Scheme that pays polluters to pollute more. And we have seen the cancellation of numerous programmes that could have helped reduce our emissions right now at low cost.

The Greens are fighting this reversal every step of the way. We think Kiwis want to do their bit for the team, not drop the ball and run away.

Water

If climate change is the greatest international environmental issue, water is the biggest domestic one, and it's especially important in Hawke's Bay.

Hawke's Bay has superb rivers, but they are under strain.

It's been great to see the people, and now Councils, beginning to stand up for the public good against private profit. The proposals for land disposal of sewage in Central Hawke's Bay will be a big help for the Tukituki River, and halting the pollution entering the Mohaka is essential to protect a river that is recognised by law as "nationally outstanding."

But nationally, we have a long way to go. Water quality continues to decline in lowland rivers and lakes, and our wild and scenic rivers are threatened with damming for electricity and being sucked dry for irrigation.

We must not let private interests profit at the expense of our public water.

A new threat emerging from the Government's recent announcement of changes to the Local Government Act is the privatisation of our drinking water. Overseas, privatised water has resulted in residents having water shut off,

unclean and polluted water making people sick, and profiteering from companies from what is fundamentally a human right.

It's very important our water infrastructure and management remains in public hands.

Conservation

The conservation of our unique species and treasured places is in peril.

Outrageously, the Government may allow mining in National Parks and other high-value conservation areas. Fortunately, we're pretty sure the people of New Zealand won't stand for it.

As well as cuts to the Department of Conservation's budget, we've seen a halt on new marine reserves. Hawke's Bay's Te Angiangi marine reserve and others have proven to be a boon for biodiversity, and improve fish abundance and size nearby too.

To add insult to injury, this Government voted down Metiria's Bill that would have fixed the laws that are failing to protect our dolphins and sea lions from extinction. We said 'Shame on National!' on that one; and the **Baybuzz** had to agree (**Baybuzz** 30 July).

Changes to the RMA

The RMA is there to ensure that we get a say in what happens to the places that are important to us, and to ensure our environment is protected. This Government has been quick to attack the public interest in the way we plan and develop our communities.

Our flagship environmental protection law has been wounded but not as badly as they wanted to. The Greens and the 1000 groups and individuals who had their say on the changes got several disastrous amendments knocked out, so you still have your right to appeal part of a plan to the Environment Court if it affects you.

On the other hand, National has raised the fee for filing an appeal to the Environment Court to 10 times what it was!

Groups like Baywatch in Hawke's Bay do excellent work to keep an eye on the councils and defend the environment from poor proposals and dodgy development, but this makes it a whole lot harder.

The Ministry of Justice described this right of appeal as "fundamental", and the fee rise as unjustified. We stuck up for your democratic rights in a complaint, and are awaiting the outcome.

The axe comes down

There have been other bizarre decisions by this Government.

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About BAYBUZZ

BayBuzz Digest is a community focused publication that examines hot button local issues and promotes public awareness and debate. A mix of independent editorial commentary, behind the scenes reporting, and a healthy dose of humor, BayBuzz Digest begins where other newspapers leave off to probe the big issues and tough questions facing our region and shaping our future.

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Editor: Tom Belford
Publisher: Brooks Belford
Production: Grow Advertising
Web site development: Mogul

BayBuzz Advisory Board:
Anna Archibald, Morry Black, Bruno Chambers,
Louis Chambers, Angela Hair, Shaun Lines, Chris Ryan,
Mark Sweet

All comments and inquiries: editors@baybuzz.co.nz or P.O. Box 8322, Havelock North 4157

COUNTERPOINT

Tim Gilbertson



And in Cell No. 4

The most remarkable goes most often unremarked.

I'm sure Shakespeare or Ben Jonson made this observation. If they didn't they should have. If not I will lay claim to the eternal verity which it contains, helping me to earn a reputation for wisdom and profundity which, who knows, will one day lead to fame, fortune and an invitation to appear on a reality television show. Thus would my life achieve completeness and meaning.

The remarkable event in question is the statement by Billy English, Minister of Finance, that the Government will borrow \$250 million a week for the next four years. At which point, we the taxpayers will be paying five billion dollars a year in interest on the debt. What the minister was saying is that New Zealand is stone motherless broke. This momentous pronouncement was greeted by the media and populace alike with a large yawn and sank without trace.

The statement is remarkable in many ways.

The first is that from about 2000 to 2005 we had the best years in financial terms since the wool boom of the 1950's. Yet three years later we are bust. This tells you that the government of the day was completely irresponsible in terms of fiscal probity and that Michael Cullen and Helen Clark should both be in jail for treason.

The second remarkable result of the unremarked news was that numerous civil servants demanded pay rises and the labour movement in general insisted that they be recompensed for their declining standard of living.

And the third result was that when the new government made a pathetic attempt to wind back government spending by reducing the monstrous burden of the runaway train called the Accident Compensation Corporation, which pays more than a lotto win for stubbing your toe, there was uproar, consternation and high drama. Instead of John Key or Billy the Finance Kid telling the truth ("There is no honey left in the honey jar, you silly bear") they muttered and mumbled about nothing

material. Both John and Bill should be next door to Helen and Michael in Cell No. 3.

I could go on about this unremarked remarkable event. Treasury has done the numbers and told our leaders that the old age pension is unsustainable. Fifty billion by 2050 and only three people left in the work force under eighty years of age to pay for it. Bill's response? This government is committed to pay universal superannuation at 65 years of age. The dopiest drongo in the Flood Hotel could tell you that there is a serious long term problem contained in that statement.

And as for our troops fighting for a regime that is only marginally less barbaric than their opponents. Is that not the most remarkable wonder of them all? My Grandfather fought for a world free of militarism in the trenches of the first world war. My father fought for a world free of fascism in the skies of western Europe during the second world war. Our troops are now fighting for a regime that is the absolute antithesis of everything this country has fought for and stands for over the last century.

Can you believe that this nation would risk the lives of its soldiers for a regime that supports starving women who refuse their husbands conjugal rights? Where is the outrage over that?

And most remarkable of all, in a local context, with the rural economy once more in disarray after three years of drought, and now facing low returns caused by a high dollar caused by the skyrocketing national debt, the Regional Council is sitting on \$150 million in cash which they refuse to return to their rightful owners, the ratepayers, in their time of desperate need. Perhaps the Regional Councillors should occupy cell No. 4 next to the other motley crew.

The good news is that last week I stood by my beehives and berated the bees for wasting time on the willow trees when my fruit trees needed pollinating. Within hours they were swarming over the apple blossom pollinating their little hearts out at a hundred miles an hour.

Someone finally took me seriously. That's the most remarkable thing of all.

Unfulfilled Promise Not living up to the Rhetoric

Cont. from pg 3

But second, perhaps more alarming because of its broader consequences, is what the comment clearly signals about where Bill English comes from when Cabinet debates occur on such matters.

In his head, they are still framed in terms of the economy VERSUS the environment. That's an antiquated notion with as much credibility these days as tying your currency to the gold standard. Sure, if you want to milk every last bit of production and revenue out of a piece of land or other natural resource as quickly as possible, unfortunately "the environment" can get in your way... there is a trade-off. But sustainable growth (and profit) requires that environmental values and carrying capacity be taken into account. Successful (i.e., profitable and job-creating) businesses are increasingly green ones.

Here in Hawke's Bay, we have numerous examples of businesses that are successful either because their core product or service is green (like 3R, Quantum Laboratory, and BBE Architects) or because they achieve cost savings and higher profitability by adopting energy-saving and other environmentally-friendly industrial practices.

However, when "economy versus environment" is the ideological mind-set of the nation's Finance Minister, it automatically gains respectability and becomes dangerous. Because facing the clout of the Finance Minister, all other ministers are eunuchs ... possibly excepting our current Tourism Minister. Hence National's cave-in on any credible Emissions Trading Scheme (no emissions cap to drive a true market price for polluting the atmosphere), and its opposition to stronger protection of endangered marine mammals.

And who knows what will happen when National gets around to actually writing national surface water standards or coastal policy, or setting out the full powers of its new Environmental Protection Agency, or completing its "reforms" of the RMA?!

Our Guest Buzzmaker actually paints a rosier picture of the National Government's one-year environmental record than I would. I'm afraid that I - a Bluegreen wannabe at heart - am inclined to see that record, like the Labour and Green Party authors elsewhere in this edition, as more rhetoric than reality.

Cont. from pg 3

The Inland Revenue saved over \$1 million for the taxpayer by cutting energy and travel bills through the Govt3 sustainability scheme; yet the Government axed it.

The implementation of the Green Party's Waste Minimisation Act has been watered down to almost nothing. Even the sensible proposal for retailers and importers of TVs and computers to help consumers recycle electronic waste has been abandoned.

And the Enviroschools programme has been so popular and successful it was being touted in trade-talks overseas as an export opportunity; yet the Government cut the funding for it.

Credit where it's due

The Green Party's one billion dollar insulation package, eventually agreed to by Labour, and now National, is a major step in providing help to communities to meet better environmental standards. The uptake of the insulation has been massive, with thousands of families now living in warmer, drier, healthier, homes.

The expected savings in health costs, energy consumption, and air pollution are significant. It's also provided jobs during the recession. It's a great example of MMP in action: what started as Green Party policy has now been accepted by all parties as a high-priority Government investment.

Environment, economy, society: three sides of the same coin!

So there you have it - our take on the Government's environmental record so far. It's not all bad, but it certainly comes nowhere close to living up to the rhetoric.

Fundamentally, we think this Government is failing to understand that taking care of the environment goes hand-in-hand with taking care of the economy and society. They can't be separated.

The Green Party recognises this by pushing for environmental protection, a fair society, and a sustainable economy all together.

We'd love to hear your views about how we can do this, and anything else. Perhaps we'll bump into you for a chat when we visit Hawke's Bay later this month.

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ARTS & Lifestyle

Roy Dunningham
Columnist



Seen This Century

Exhibition at Judith Anderson Gallery,
Kereru Road, Maraekakaho



The Pass – Callum Arnold

Ten years can be a long time in art and, since the late 19th century, each decade has stamped its own identity upon art history. *Seen This Century* exhibition, at Judith Anderson's Maraekakaho gallery, surveys some of the artists who have emerged on the New Zealand art scene during the past decade.

The artists showing are drawn from Warwick Brown's book on new New Zealand art, from which the show takes its name: "*Seen this century*". Their work makes an interesting comparison with the later 20th century artists covered in Brown's two earlier books on New Zealand art. The shifts in style are not dramatic but they are real and they are discernible.

So what are these shifts that we can see? Well, there is a growing interest in *how* we see things rather than *what* we see. Materials and subject matter are treated more non-judgmentally with fewer barriers between "art" and "non-art". Sometimes "good taste" as we perceive it is questioned, not that that is new. Were Goya's etchings or Rembrandt's "Flayed Ox" in good taste? Above all, it is more "international" in emphasis, with few of the regional concerns that we might have seen, say, in the work of Hotere or McCahon.

Some of the artists address the way we perceive art itself. Samantha Mitchell plays upon that perception, assaulting our "good taste" reflexes by employing images gleaned from tattooists and comics. These images are incongruously super-imposed on to a bizarrely coloured, "innocent child" face taken from comics or advertising. The sentimental slogans are subverted to question the values they purport to represent and they challenge the viewer to ponder on what they really mean.

It is interesting to compare Callum Arnold's landscape with those from the Kelliher Prize era of the 1960s. The Kelliherers are concerned purely with the objects shown -- hills, trees and sky. But do we really see and recall things with such fixed, single view clarity? Arnold looks at how we see them as our eye scans and memory blurs one view into another. Arnold's beautifully painted landscape is quite magical.

Matthew Couper is something of an artistic gannet as he scavenges an idiosyncratic range of subjects and art periods for his ideas. Rituals, including Christian and Masonic rituals, interest him... not so much, I suspect, for their ascribed meaning than as phenomena of human behaviour. This diversity of sources creates a guessing game for viewers. When are the sometimes strange combinations of images truly impulsive as in pure surrealism, and when is there a deliberate agenda to be deciphered by the viewer? Sometimes it may be the sheer fun of creating visual puns and conundrums or some serious social comment to which the text gives a clue. Couper is certainly one of the most original of this generation of artists.

Some of the artists draw on Modernist styles from the 20th century, reshaping them for their own purpose. "Total Invasion (Break Records)" by James Robinson is a good example as he reprises the energy of 1950s Abstract Expressionism. But, unlike the heroic exuberance of Pollock and de Kooning, Robinson's seemingly random drips and splatterings evoke an apocalyptic landscape comprising things gone wrong or unwanted (like the skin off an old paint pot). There is even an apparently futile attempt with crude stitching to "put things right." Unlike his 20th

century progenitors, he includes graffiti-like text offering support to his agenda.

Don't be fooled by the apparent disorder in this work. Robinson has an acute sense of pictorial organisation, achieving a wonderfully taut composition with a deceptive delicacy of tone and colour.

Matthew Dowman also revisits Abstract Expressionism but in a much less aggressive way. Using a variety of methods to apply the paint, his work is a lovely orchestration of interesting colours and tones rather like an electronic circuit in poetic melt down.



Streamer – Miranda Parke

The use of found objects in art is not new but Alexander Bartleet adds his own variation. He fills the picture space with a bewildering range of common items from hinges to cheap jewellery to give what Warwick Brown calls "the sense of a seething, energised mass." Bartleet then alters their "realness" to "painterliness" by over-brushing paint and then rubbing back. The objects now look



Rough Section – Alexander Bartleet

super-real but their original nature changes as they become harmonised parts of an abstract painting ... like the paint dribbles in a Jackson Pollock.

For sheer playfulness it is hard to go past Miranda Parke's work as she crumples and shapes a canvas covered in banal coloured squares into something sensuous and opulent as it blooms out of the wall in three dimensions.

For me, the most touching work in the show is "Big Head Woolly" by Kristin Hollis. It is simply a large drawing in charcoal and aquarelle of a sheep's head. Somehow she makes it touching and tender with a dark sense of impending tragedy and all of this without a hint of mawkish sentiment. It is beautifully drawn and a terrific composition.

Warwick Brown's book is valuable contribution to our knowledge of recent New Zealand art, but his selection of 100 new artists does stretch the bounds of quality at times. Some of this unevenness of quality carries over to this exhibition, but the greater part of it reflects a vibrant and refreshingly diverse art scene.

Seen This Century opens on 7th November and, for anyone seriously interested in contemporary art, this is essential viewing.

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Brendan Webb
Columnist



Catching a Wave

"If the BBC, which is a reliable news outlet, says there is a tsunami when there was not, says there is a tsunami heading to New Zealand when there was not, says it is aimed at Gisborne when it was not, and says there is police alert when there was not, and if people accept the value of that news report, then the BBC is at fault. The member cannot point the finger at the Ministry of Civil Defence and Emergency Management for that." (Hansard, May 2006.)

-- Labour's Civil Defence minister Rick Barker defending his ministry after it took more than three hours to make any statement about a BBC report suggesting a tsunami could be heading for the East Coast.

Now, cut to 2009.

The minister was fuming

He had woken up to the screeching call of the kea on National Radio and news that an earthquake had triggered tsunami fears in the Pacific. He rang the national director of Civil Defence and after waiting several minutes, heard a voice come on the line.

The director sounded tense. His tone changed when he realised it was the minister.

"What's happening? Is a tsunami coming or not?" barked the minister. The national director shifted uneasily in his chair. He rested his marker pen on the most recent review of the National Civil Defence Management Warning System and gazed out at Wellington Harbour. The Interislander was heading out.

"It's unclear at this point in time sir," he replied. "Details are a bit sketchy. We've got the seismic boys analysing the data now. The situation is being closely monitored."

"What does that mean? Can't someone tell me what's happening?" snapped the minister.

"We had exactly this scenario with Rick Barker back in 2005 when the bloody BBC seemed to know more about a tsunami threat to New Zealand than we did."

The national director breathed deeply. "We see no reason for the people of Gisborne to get in their cars and drive to the top of Kaiti Hill like they did last time there was a flap about a tsunami," he said. "On the other hand, it might pay for them to take basic measures right now, such as parking their cars facing the road so they can get away more quickly in

an emergency, filling their pockets with tins of baked beans --- simple precautions like that."

The minister's voice became menacing. "Listen, I'll have bloody Sean Plunket interrogating me live on air in a few minutes. What am I supposed to tell him? That his guess is as good as mine? That we're waiting for a bloody text from a Fiji resort manager to tell us a wall of water is heading our way?"

The national controller watched a plane climb unsteadily into Wellington's grey skies. Inspiration struck him. "Perhaps we should send up an Air Force Orion so we can get visual confirmation."

There was a choking sound on the other end of the phone. "Are you mad? It takes 24 hours to pull together something like that and anyway, all the Orions are non-operational. One is in maintenance being fitted with parts stripped from the rest."

The national controller cleared his throat. "Rest assured minister, you'll know as soon as we do," he said, putting the phone down before the minister could answer. He googled "Fijian holiday resorts."

The bay was calm and blue

He sat in the firm's van and stared out to sea. The white cliffs of Kidnappers were clearly etched over to the right. Away to the left, wisps of steam from the Whirinaki pulp mill and the blur of Mahia Peninsula barely visible on the horizon.

But no sign of the tsunami they'd been talking about on the radio. His eyes squinted as he tried to detect a line, a shadow on the shimmering sea. Nothing.

He wished he'd grabbed a coffee at the BP station when he'd bought the steak and cheese pie. It would be too far to go back now, He might miss the wave.

The radio had said any tsunami would come on the high tide at about 10.30, which was four minutes ago.

There were already about eight cars scattered along the beach near him. Most were parked facing the bay, a couple were at an angle. It was school holidays and one dad had brought his kids, who stood on the top of the shingle, staring at the sea.

The digital clock on the van's dash read 10.34 but still no wave.



He got out and walked down on to the stones. He checked his cellphone battery. He didn't want to miss out on getting a shot if the wave did appear. He'd post it on YouTube. Might be worth good money. Anyway, it had better hurry up. He could only spare another five minutes before the boss would be looking for him.

He tossed the pie bag out the window as two more cars pulled up on the beachfront.

The regional ops room

The digital clock on the wall of the region's Civil Defence operations room read 10.00 as the deputy controller scanned his e-mails.

The walls of the ops room were covered in maps and charts. A large whiteboard with six different coloured marker pens stood at one end of the room. The deputy controller had written "quake" in black letters near the top. Then he'd added "mag 7.8" and underlined it with a zig-zag flourish.

He decided the board looked too bare for an ops room so he drew a long sausage, added a few blobs for islands and wrote "Indo". A bulging line showed the coast of Australia and two cigar shapes represented New Zealand. A large reverse shark fin, depicting the unconfirmed tsunami, was done in thick red lines. As a final touch, he drew three red arrows

across the white expanse of the Pacific, their tips pointing at the two sausages. They made him think of barbecues.

There were several of them in the room now, two of them watching the deputy controller checking his e-mails. The controller was at his computer, carefully reading the media releases from head office. He was expecting a call from the mayor wanting to know whether the entire population should be moved to the top of Bluff Hill.

The ops room was under the regional council's office block. It was the nerve centre in a civil emergency in the district, such as earthquakes or a tsunami. He was slightly uncomfortable about its underground location, in a city once levelled by an earthquake.

On the wall was the ministry's bright yellow Survival Guide, listing the things to do if there was an official tsunami warning. It recommended going at least a kilometre inland or somewhere 35 metres above sea level.

He tried not to think about the ops room being below sea level, just two tar-sealed blocks from the foreshore.

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