

Executive summary

This report reviews the Taranaki Regional Council's performance and achievements for the 2005/2006 year relating to recreation, culture and heritage. This activity encompasses regional assistance for the redevelopment of Yarrow Stadium and assistance in maintaining and enhancing three of Taranaki's regionally significant and nationally recognised gardens – the Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust Gardens, Hollard Gardens and Tupare. Through these activities, the Council is providing for high quality and diverse recreational experiences and is contributing towards making Taranaki a sustainable and vibrant region.

Set out below is a summary of the main activities carried out in relation to recreation, culture and heritage by the Taranaki Regional Council in 2005/2006:

- On-going repayment from targeted rates of the Taranaki Regional Council grant towards the development of Yarrow Stadium. 2005/2006 was the fourth year of the 10-year life of the targeted rate
- Revised asset management plans for Tupare and Hollard Gardens finalised and adopted on 21 September 2005 following an extensive development and consultation process
- Commenced works to implement the asset management plans for Tupare and Hollard Gardens
- Regular planting, tree surgery work, woody and herbaceous husbandry and weed control undertaken as part of the on-going maintenance and upkeep of Hollard and Tupare gardens
- Stakeholder funding arrangements between the Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust and Council continued.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose

This report reviews the Taranaki Regional Council's performance and achievements relating to recreation, culture and heritage activities relating to the 2005/2006 year.

1.2 Background

Through the Taranaki Regional Council Empowering Act 2001, the Taranaki Regional Council ('the Council') has the ability to undertake, implement, encourage or maintain any service, works or facilities that are for the recreational or cultural well-being of Taranaki, or that are for preserving or encouraging the reasonable enjoyment of the physical and cultural heritage of the Taranaki region.

Taranaki has several outstanding gardens that are regarded as being of national significance. These gardens are a defining point of difference for the region and are a national and international highlight for residents and visitors alike. They are also treasured community amenities. Three of these gardens are:

- Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust Gardens;
- Hollard Gardens; and
- Tupare.

Following the enactment of the Taranaki Regional Council Empowering Act, the Council in consultation with stakeholders reached agreement on the ownership, governance and funding arrangements to maintain and enhance the three gardens. These arrangements included the Council taking ownership and responsibility for the management of Hollard Gardens and Tupare and providing financial and other support for the Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust towards the operation and development of the Pukeiti Gardens (Figure 1).

Prior to the Council taking ownership or providing financial support, Pukeiti, Hollard and Tupare gardens had struggled with financial constraints. Furthermore, in the absence of a strategic professional approach to the garden's future



Figure 1: The regional gardens

maintenance and development, there were risks to the long term quality of these amenities.

Under the Taranaki Regional Council Empowering Act, the Council also provided 'one-off' funding and support for the development of Yarrow Stadium.

1.2.1 Objective

The overall objective for recreation, culture and heritage activities for 2005/2006, as set out in the Council's 2005/2006 *Annual Plan* are:

"To facilitate the redevelopment of Rugby Park into Yarrow Stadium."

"To ensure that the Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust Gardens, Hollard Gardens and Tupare are maintained and enhanced as regionally significant recreational and heritage amenities."

1.2.2 Programme

In response to the above objective, the Council adopted the following performance measures for 2005/2006, as set out in the Council's 2005/2006 *Annual Plan*:

- A one-off grant of \$9.6 million was provided to the Taranaki Events Centre Trust in 2001/2002 for the purpose of developing Rugby Park into Yarrow Stadium. The only activity in this area for 2005/2006 is the repayment of the grant from targeted rates which is scheduled for completion in 2011/2012.
- Adopt asset management plans for Tupare and Hollard gardens.
- Commence the development of Tupare and Hollard gardens to the standards established in the asset management plans.
- Provide operational funding support to the Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust.

2. Report on progress

2.1 Funding for the development of Yarrow Stadium

In 2002, after an extensive consultation process and following the promulgation of the Taranaki Regional Council Empowering Act 2001, the Council provided a one-off grant of \$9.6 million to the Taranaki Events Centre Trust for the purposes of developing Yarrow Stadium. Of this, \$6.4 million is planned to be repaid by way of regional targeted rates over a period of 10 years.

In terms of Council activities, no further funding is provided for Yarrow Stadium. The only activity undertaken in this area is the repayment of the Council's grant from the regional targeted rates (\$876,000 per annum over 10 years). 2005/2006 was the fourth year of the 10-year life of the targeted rate



Yarrow Stadium, New Plymouth

2.2 Strategy and plans for the regional gardens

As part of the agreement for ownership, governance and funding arrangements, the Taranaki Regional Gardens Project Technical Advisory Group was established to develop an integrated strategy to maintain and enhance Pukeiti, Hollard and Tupare gardens into a nationally significant regional gardens package (hereafter referred to as 'the Regional Gardens Project').

There were two stages to the Regional Gardens Project. Stage I, completed in 2002/2003, involved extensive consultation and the preparation of the report entitled *Regional Gardens Project*. This report set out the strategic vision, purpose and goals in relation to the gardens. Stage II involved the preparation of more comprehensive and detailed asset management plans to develop, present, manage and promote all three regional gardens.

The Council adopted the final asset management plans on 25 September 2005. At the same time, the Technical Advisory Group finalised the Pukeiti asset management plan and forwarded the plan to the Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust. The finalised asset management plans represented the conclusion of significant and extensive development and consultation process undertaken by the Technical Advisory Group.

The 2005/2006 Annual Plan provided the operational and financial budgets to begin the implementation of the asset management plans. These budgets were spread over two or three years (see the 2006/2016 Long Term Council Community Plan) to reflect the timeline for full implementation.

The Council has taken a number of steps to begin the implementation process. The most significant of these is the purchase of a neighbouring property at Tupare. The purchase of this property allows for the full and safe redevelopment of the entry and car parking facilities at Tupare. The Council is currently making the necessary appointments to provide the full staffing complement recommended in the asset management plans.

In terms of timing, the Council has not made as much progress in the implementation of the asset management plans as envisaged when the 2005/2006 Annual Plan was prepared and adopted. Part of this relates to the timing of the adoption of the asset management plans being later than envisaged.

Consequently, the operational and capital budgets established for 2005/2006 for the implementation of the plans were significantly under spent. As the implementation of the plans accelerates, there will be a corresponding over expenditure in the 2006/2007 and 2007/2008 financial years.

2.3 Management and development of the regional gardens

2.3.1 Hollard Gardens

Hollard Gardens are located north of Kaponga. Established in 1927, the Gardens contain a large collection of temperate zone plants from around the world and a significant and unique collection of rare and endangered New Zealand plants. In 1982, the Gardens were gifted to the Queen Elizabeth II National Trust as a recognised landscape of national importance. On 1 July 2002, ownership was transferred to the Council to manage on behalf of the people of Taranaki.

Hollard Gardens receives between 2,000 and 4,000 visitors per annum. The main visitor season is between September and March with visitor numbers peaking over the annual Taranaki Rhododendron Festival in October/November.

The Council directly manages Hollard Gardens. In 2005/2006, significant tree surgery works were undertaken in the Gardens. Some of this work was necessary to address damage to the Gardens caused by storms. However, most of the work was scheduled tree surgery work, woody and herbaceous plant husbandry and weed control necessary to maintain a high standard of presentation.

In the Arboretum, Council staff removed a 25 year old *Sequoia giganteum*, which was misshapen and in poor health. A *Chamaeyparis nootkatensis* adjacent to the gazebo was removed due to canker infestations and as part of preparing the area for the children's playground. Some judicious lifting of the Scot's pines was also completed in this area.

At each end of the Deciduous Bed, there has also been some tree culling. A group of Western Red Cedar (*Thuja plicata*) that had been growing well previously had become extremely unsightly and were dying. The Cedar trees were replaced by two Fir trees *Abies georgei* and *Abies nephrolepis*, which are canker resistant and grow quite well at Hollard Gardens.



Hollard Gardens are a recognised landscape of national importance.

At the northern end of the Deciduous Bed, the primary shelter of *Chamaecyparis leylandii* and *Casurina cunninghamii* were also removed because of canker and borer. These trees have been replaced with Japanese Cedar (*Cryptomeria japonica* 'Elegans' and *Cryptomeria japonica* 'Egmont') and *Thujopsis dolobrata*. The cause of all removals has been canker. In recent times, canker infestations have been a severe problem in the gardens resulting in plantings becoming unsightly. Plants removed are replaced with species more resistant to canker.

Council staff also undertook pruning works, including the lifting of blackwoods along the West Walk to increase light and assist the growth and flowering of the many rhododendrons underneath. Likewise, a mixed row of *Grisellina*, *Corokia* and *Olearia* was removed in the Rosemary Bed. Again this provided much need room and light for the rhododendrons adjacent.

The New Garden (1982) is beginning to mature. The open space of this garden provides a useful contrast to that of the quintessential woodland feel of the Old Garden.

Council officers also undertook maintenance works in the Old Garden. All the seasonal plant husbandry from clipping evergreen azaleas to pruning the hydrangeas to shaping rhododendrons has been undertaken. The southern boundary fence has also been replaced. This involves cutting down the barberry hedge and placing the new fence along the hedgeline for the hedge to grow through.

2.3.2 Tupare

Tupare is located on the outskirts of New Plymouth. The 3.6 hectare property comprises a heritage residence and classical garden in a unique Taranaki setting. Developed over a 50-year period from 1932, Tupare assumed a reputation as one of the finest landscape gardens in New Zealand.

In 1985, the Queen Elizabeth II National Trust purchased Tupare. As from 1 July 2002, ownership and responsibility for the day-to-day management of the Gardens was transferred to the Council. The Gardens are estimated to attract around 2,000 to 3,000 visitors annually. The main visitor season is between September to March and peaking over the annual Taranaki Rhododendron Festival in October/November.

The Council directly manages Tupare. In 2005/2006, the Council undertook significant works as part of the on going improvements being carried out to Tupare. These works included terracing at the top of Mary Lane and both John and Jill Walks, and the refurbishing of the water feature (known as Cliff's Cascade), which is an integral part of the Tupare attraction.

In 2005/06, Council staff also undertook regular tree surgery work, woody and herbaceous plant husbandry and weed



A Chapman-Taylor designed Tudor styled house complements the garden setting at Tupare Gardens.

control necessary for the on-going maintenance and restoration of Tupare. The Redwoods were pruned, and the Gum trees at the Top Lawn were culled. In terms of replanting, Council staff planted azaleas at the top of Cliff's Cascade and along Richard's Walk. The fence and gate between the River Flat and Mary's Lane was also replaced.

Weed control and soil health are continuing problems that the Council are progressing on. Since the ownership and management of Tupare was transferred to the Council, steady improvement to the appearance and health of the garden has been made. The completed tree works has created more light and space and opened up new view shafts within the garden and into the outer landscape. Overall the garden is less cluttered and is beginning to regain the scale and proportion in the plantings that Tupare was once famous for.

Weed control has been continued with in a staged manner. Weeds such as Japanese Anemone (*Anemone xhybrida*), Plectranthus (*Plectranthus oertendahlii*) and Lamium (*Galeobdolon argentatum*) were chemically treated in the active growing season. Council staff also undertook the manually removal of these weeds where appropriate. Thrip control using Lorsban and Orthene was also necessary last season.



Time out to appreciate Tupare Gardens

2.3.3 Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust Gardens

The Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust Gardens are an internationally acclaimed garden. Located on the north-west slopes of Mount Taranaki/Egmont and on the border of Egmont National Park and set in a rainforest setting, the Gardens contain one of the most comprehensive rhododendron collections in the southern hemisphere.

Established in 1951, the Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust owns and manages the Gardens. The Gardens attract between 8,000 and 10,000 visitors annually. Over the past few years, visitor numbers have remained relatively constant with peak visitor numbers occurring in October and November in association with the annual



Pukeiti has the most comprehensive rhododendron collection in the southern hemisphere.

Taranaki Rhododendron Festival.

As from 1 July 2002, the Council has entered into a funding agreement with the Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust. In 2005/2006, the Council provided \$50,000 towards the management and development of Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust Gardens.

As part of the stakeholder funding agreement, the Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust has participated in the asset management planning process. A Pukeiti asset management plan has been prepared and presented to the Trust Board for its consideration. Responsibility for the day-to-day management of Gardens remains with the Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust, including the implementation of the asset management plan for Pukeiti.



Walk in the rainforest

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, the Council has substantially met its performance targets for 2005/2006 as set out in the Council's *2005/2006 Annual Plan*. Through the maintenance and enhancement of three of Taranaki's regionally significant and nationally recognised gardens – the Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust Gardens, Hollard Gardens and Tupare – and the development of Yarrows Stadium, the Council is providing for high quality and diverse recreational experiences and is contributing towards making Taranaki a sustainable and vibrant region.

Programmes and performance measures

1. On-going repayment from targeted rates of the Taranaki Regional Council grant towards the development of Yarrow Stadium. 2005/2006 was the fourth year of the 10-year life of the targeted rate
2. Revised asset management plans for Tupare and Hollard gardens finalised and adopted on 21 September 2005 following an extensive development and consultation process
3. Commenced works to implement the asset management plans for Tupare and Hollard gardens
4. Regular planting, tree surgery work, woody and herbaceous husbandry and weed control undertaken as part of the on-going maintenance and upkeep of Hollard and Tupare gardens
5. Stakeholder funding arrangements between the Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust and Council continued.