

## Executive summary

This report reviews the Taranaki Regional Council's performance and achievements for the 2008/2009 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.

The main focus for the year was the completion of the development phase of the Tupare and Hollard Gardens asset management plans in October and November 2008. A combination of small private functions and large public events were held to celebrate the completion of this phase.

As a result of the completion of the redevelopment of the properties, the public use of the gardens has jumped significantly. The Council reported the number of visitors for 2007/2008 of 4,000 for Tupare and 2,500 for Hollard Gardens. This has risen to 21,100 for Tupare and 11,600 for Hollard Gardens for 2008/2009. The growth of visitor numbers is the focus for 2008/2009.

Both Tupare and Hollard Gardens have benefited from the increased operational and capital commitment from the Council over the last few years. With the completion of the development phase of the plans, the properties are now in their most important phase – encouraging the people of the region, and their visitors to use Tupare and Hollard Gardens to the full.

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 2008/2009:

- On-going repayment from targeted rates of the Taranaki Regional Council grant towards the development of Yarrow Stadium. 2008/2009 was the seventh year of the 10-year life of the targeted rate
- Completion of the enhancement and development works outlined in the asset management plans for Tupare and Hollard Gardens
- Relaunching Tupare and Hollard Gardens
- Regular planting, tree surgery work, woody and herbaceous husbandry and weed control undertaken as part of the on-going management, including public relations and upkeep of Hollard and Tupare gardens
- Increasing public use of the facilities with 21,000 visitors at Tupare and 11,600 visitors at Hollard 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 during the 2008/2009 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
- 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 support for the Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust. (Figure1).

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

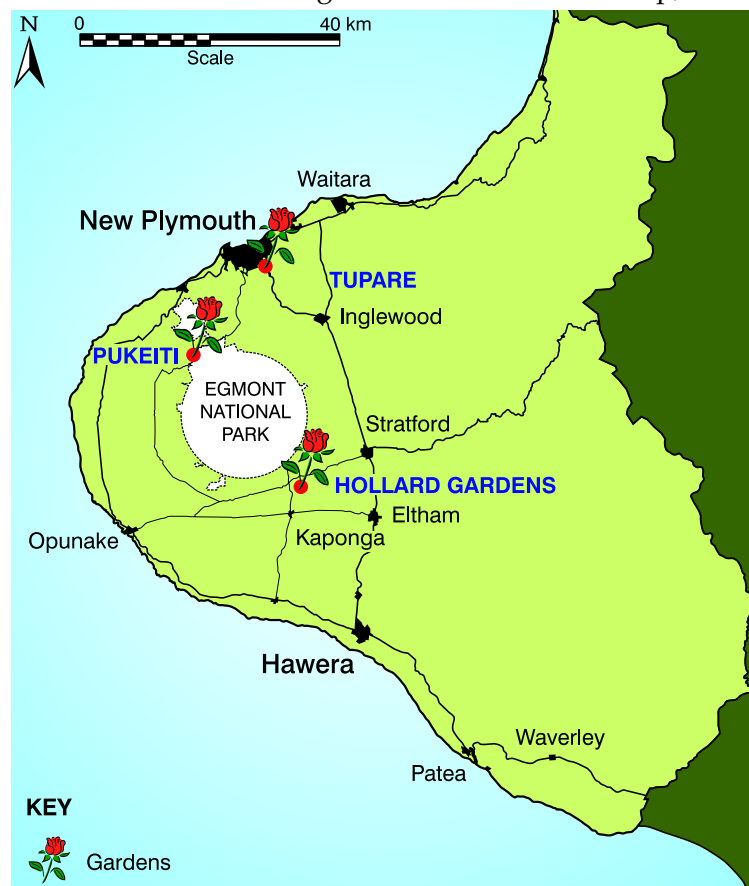


Figure 1: The regional gardens

### **1.2.1 Objective**

The overall objectives for recreation, culture and heritage activities for 2008/2009, as set out in the Council's *2008/2009 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 objectives, the Council adopted the following performance measures for 2008/2009, as set out in the Council's *2008/2009 Annual Plan*:

- Provide two regional gardens (Tupare and Hollard Gardens) for free use by the regional community.
- Encourage the increased use of the regional gardens by the community for recreational purposes and for specific events.
- Maintain the regional regions to the levels of service established in the asset management plans for the two properties.
- Undertake a plant labelling programme in accordance with the collection management plan.
- Provide financial support (\$50,000) 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). 2008/2009 was the seventh 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 took a number of steps to begin the implementation process. The most significant of these was the purchase of a neighbouring property at Tupare which has allowed for the full and safe redevelopment of the entry and car parking facilities at Tupare.

The Council has also made the necessary appointments to provide the full staffing complement recommended in the asset management plans for both Tupare and Hollard Gardens.

### **Review of asset management plans**

In 2008, the Council completed the first three-year review of the asset management plans for inclusion in the *2009/2019 Long-Term Council Community Plan*. The reviewed asset management plans were very similar to the 2005 plans. The focus has moved away from a capital redevelopment programme to a programme of management of the properties and enhancing the use of the properties by the regional community. As a consequence the capital redevelopment budgets are significantly reduced from the 2005 programmes. The on-going maintenance programmes are at similar levels to the 2005 programmes. There is an increased focus in the 2008 plans on marketing to extend the use of the gardens by as wide a group as possible.

There were two issues raised in the 2005 asset management plans that were put on hold until the preparation of the *2009/2019 Long-Term Council Community Plan*. Both of these issues relate to Hollard Gardens. First is the use of the old family home as a visitor centre and/or relocating the property out of the gardens. Second is the development of an educational facility. These projects were put on the back-burner until the visitor demand for the projects was such that the expenditure was warranted. Due to the timing of the completion of the redevelopment of the properties, the ability to measure and grow the public demand for the additional facilities has not occurred. Accordingly the 2008 asset management plans recommend the reconsideration of these issues as part of the 2011 review of the asset management plans for the *2012/2022 Long-Term Council Community Plan*.

### **Qualmark**

Both gardens currently hold a Qualmark licence, an internationally recognised tourism accreditation. To gain a licence, the gardens were assessed on their facilities; equipment and surrounds; people management; environmental responsibility; heritage and cultural considerations; health and safety; business management and overall performance; and customer satisfaction and feedback.

### **Relaunch of gardens**

In October/November 2008, an official launch and public event were held to present both Tupare and Hollard Gardens to the people of Taranaki.

Following the launch, the focus has moved away from redeveloping the gardens to a programme of maintenance of the properties and enhancing the use of the properties by the regional community.

## **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.

The Council directly manages Hollard Gardens with permanent staff, which allows increased plant husbandry, weed control and a general standard of care and attention to detail to be ongoing.

Hollard Gardens has been reassessed and has retained its National Gardens of Significance rating. This is reviewed on a three-yearly basis.

Development works completed this year, as outlined in the asset management plan for Hollard Gardens, include:

- refurbishment of the carpark and entrance
- redevelopment of the pond at the north end of the carpark, including the planting of rare and endangered native plants
- construction of a new Gatehouse at the entrance of the garden which is providing visitors with an initial experience and has been carefully designed so they are immediately connected with the garden. The Gatehouse provides weather protection and wayfinding (path routes) and interpretative information so that visitors can confidently commence their tour of the garden
- construction of two new shelters and the placement of appropriately designed seats;
- reopening of a path closed for over 20 years which provides new areas for visitors to enjoy and the construction of a new swamp lookout which offers new opportunities to view a very popular area of the garden during Spring



*Carpark at Hollard Gardens*



*Visitor information at the Gatehouse*



*Saving seed workshop in the new pavilion*

- construction of an events pavilion which is playing an important part in growing visitor numbers as it is providing a unique setting for weddings/functions and is an excellent venue for hosting garden workshops. Toilets and basic kitchen facilities are included as well as a useful covered area for people to gather
- construction of a children's play area designed as a unique Hollard Garden playground which includes a lookout for adults to capture the stunning views across the garden to the mountain and down the ring plain to the South Taranaki bight. Picnic tables and a barbeque complete an attractive area for families or groups to enjoy
- Extension of the office/workshop to relocate the Gardener's office and provide covered staff facilities. The toilets have been refurbished and a new water tank has been installed to collect stormwater which will provide an alternative water supply during drought conditions.



*Lookout in the children's playground*

- construction of a new service route from the south-end of the carpark to the rear of the events pavilion to enable an all-weather access to the building for caterers or other service providers
- completion of installation of new signage/interpretation.



### **Plant database**

BG Base, a plant database system, has been installed and data entry has commenced for Hollard Gardens and Tupare. This system is used extensively throughout the world and is a cost effective and comprehensive means of plant recording. Plant entries of 1486 [target 1,500] for Hollard Gardens and 366 [target 400] for Tupare for this year were very close to being achieved.

### **Garden events**

This year, events held in the garden included:

- a private function to relaunch the gardens
- two farmers markets to celebrate the relaunch of the gardens
- three weddings
- four workshops on gardening topics which have received a very positive response.



*Farmers market*

Hollard Gardens has received approximately 11,610 visitors during the year. During the Taranaki Rhododendron Festival in October/November, the property had nearly 3,500 visitors.

Hollard Gardens has been maintained to a high standard throughout the year. It is open to the public between 9.00 am and 5.00 pm 7 days per week with free access.

The garden is presented to a high standard with thorough weed control, quality plant husbandry and continued expansion of the plant collection.

The number of visitors and events have increased with the local community beginning to use the gardens for recreational purposes with the children's playground and barbeque being used frequently. Garden workshops have attracted a wide audience for specific purposes.

### 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 Council directly manages Tupare with a permanent staff which allows increased garden management (plant husbandry, weed control and a general standard of care and attention to detail) to be ongoing.

A major refurbishment has extended Tupare's appeal beyond being known as an attractive garden with beautiful vistas - *sculptured from a Taranaki hillside, Tupare is now once again a premier landscaped garden.* Development works completed as outlined in the asset management plan for Tupare include:



Tupare

The stylish house, designed by 'arts and crafts' architect James Chapman-Taylor and built in 1932, is fully restored and any later influences that have impacted on the house over the years have been taken out. In particular, the house restoration project has involved: maintenance of all woodwork; exterior and interior painting; a refit of the

kitchen to provide for group catering; restoration of furniture and fittings; and installation of camera surveillance and burglar alarms.

The intention of the restoration of the house is to connect with the vision - *experience a beautifully restored garden and Chapman-Taylor house.*

The house is now offering an authentic insight into life as it was for the Matthews family in the 1950's. Since the relaunch of the gardens in October, hundreds of visitors have enjoyed a house tour conducted by Friends of Tupare.

### **Carpark and Gatehouse entrance**

The completion of a new 33 space carpark on land adjoining the garden means visitors are now parking safely off the road. The carpark has also been innovatively designed to be environmental friendly.

Stormwater run-off from the 1,400 square metre area is largely kept on site, rather than being allowed to enter the public stormwater system. Only in severe rainfall events, will it overflow into the public system.

Plantings in the carpark are maturing and the restraining wall at the rear of the carpark is very attractive, providing an exciting 'first impression' for visitors.

From the carpark, visitors enter the property through a new gatehouse containing wayfinding maps, brochures and Council information to allow full appreciation of the property and its cultural and historic significance.

This new gatehouse is constructed to the same design as the former gatehouse which enabled the existing roof to be incorporated into the new structure.

### **Cottage restoration**

The Cottage in the grounds of Tupare has been converted into an Interpretation Centre with attractive interior furnishings and interesting displays. Tea and coffee making facilities for visiting groups.

The cottage provides wheelchair access and the toilets at the rear of the Cottage have been reconfigured and totally refurbished.



*House tours*



*Carpark at Tupare*



*Interior of Cottage*

### **Sunken Lawn**

This area is marked on the visitor guides/maps as 'Mary's Garden'. This was traditionally an important part of the garden and a favourite of Lady Matthews.

The brickwork was designed to blend with the surrounding walls and the actual plantings are in the 'arts and crafts' style with a lively and intimate feel. It has become a favourite place for visitors to the garden.



*Sunken Lawn*

### **Glasshouse**

An arts and crafts-style glasshouse, modelled on the old glasshouse is visitor friendly, and is filled with plantings with a 1950's theme.

### **Interpretation/Wayfinding/Signage**

Telling the stories of the Matthews family and the people around them is a critical aspect of the project and has required considerable planning and resources. The Cottage, converted to an Interpretation Centre, has been set dressed as a gardener's office with story panels adorning the walls. Sir Russell Matthews' garden tools, gifted to the Taranaki Aviation Transport and Technology Museum (TATATM) in 1995, have been returned and will be on display.

Items on permanent loan from TATATM will also be on permanent display in one of the garages below the house.

Throughout the garden, wayfinding (path routes) and information panels have been tastefully designed and manufactured and assist visitors to make their way around the garden ensuring that no part of the garden is missed.



All signage throughout the house and garden displays the new branding *Relive the splendour* and where appropriate, the Taranaki Regional Council's branding has been incorporated.

### **Garden structures and features**

Garden furniture designed in the 'arts and crafts' style of the property and constructed by a local craftsman has been placed throughout the garden.

A number of split-stone structures have been built, including new paths and lookouts. The latter are situated at the end of the North Garden, above the main driveway and on the top lawn. The 'John Walk' path has been realigned and resealed to tidy the edging.

The tennis pergola has been rebuilt which involved sourcing 12 inch clay sewer pipes for the damaged columns and rebuilding them to match the originals.

New period lighting has been placed from the Gatehouse to the main driveway, down the main driveway and in the lower carpark. In some instances, new gates have been built to existing designs, including authentic replication of hinges and latches.

### **'Ups and Downs' garden**

The area known to the Matthews family as 'Ups and Downs', was brought into the garden due to the generosity of a neighbour. This area is a significant addition to the accessible areas of the garden, has enhanced internal and external views and provides better access to the bush walk. The area has been landscaped and a path resurfaced.

### **Garden planting**

Planting continues with thoughtful consideration to placement, composition and ongoing care. This is critical to the success of the landscape values. The plantings in the John Walk, Top Lawn Border, North Garden Border and the Lower Dell have all been rejuvenated and will be of particular interest to visitors as they grow and mature.

### **Garden relaunch and ongoing events**

In October, to relaunch the garden and invite the people of Taranaki to celebrate the refurbishment of the property, private and public functions were held.

The public function including an Antiques Roadshow which attracted 1,400 people, provided an opportunity to view the gardens and take a tour through the house.



*Garden relaunch*

A Farmers Market held in April this year was also very popular and attracted 1,750 people and stallholders.

Tupare received approximately 21,186 visitors during the year. Twelve weddings were held. The main visitor season is between September and March and peaking over the annual Taranaki Rhododendron Festival in October/November. This was the second year, Tupare was officially part of the Rhododendron Festival.



*Farmers market*

During the year, workshops on various topics relating to gardening have been well attended and many more are planned for the future.

The New Plymouth Floral Art Club and New Plymouth Camera Club also participated by leading workshops on related topics.

Power and water have been supplied to the river flat. This area has proved to be a popular destination for picnicking and swimming.

This is the first stage, the next stage will see the design and installation of a toilet/shelter building.



*Floral Art Workshop*

Tupare has been maintained to a high standard throughout the year. It is open to the public between 9.00 am and 5.00 pm 7 days per week with free access.

The garden is presented to a high standard with thorough weed control, quality plant husbandry and continued consideration of the vision in terms of new plantings.

The number of visitors and events have increased with the local community beginning to use the gardens for recreational purposes such as picnics and swimming during the summer months. Garden workshops have attracted a wide audience for specific purposes.

### **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 Taranaki Rhododendron Festival.



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

As from 1 July 2002, the Council has entered into a funding agreement with the Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust. In 2008/2009, 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 participated in the asset management planning process. A Pukeiti asset management plan was 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.

### **3. Conclusion**

In conclusion, the Council has substantially met its performance targets for 2008/2009 as set out in the Council's *2008/2009 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.

