



LANDSCAPE, HERITAGE AND AMENITY VALUES



LANDSCAPE

Taranaki has a number of outstanding and regionally significant landscapes. Mount Taranaki dominates the landscape and together with the Kaitake and Pouākai ranges is of national and international significance. Outstanding landscapes are identified in each district plan. For most areas identified in the New Plymouth District, there have been no significant changes, since 1995, that have adversely affected landscape qualities. Although landscape values on the ring plain on the northern slopes of the Kaitake and Pouākai ranges have been affected to some degree by increased building density. While there have been some developments along State Highway 3 in the past five years, these have not had significant adverse effects overall on landscape qualities identified for the Stratford District. South Taranaki District Council is to undertake a landscape assessment of the district.



HERITAGE

The Taranaki region has significant historic heritage resources that provide important links with the past. Historic buildings, structures, places, wāhi tapu or other sites have archaeological, historic, architectural, cultural, scientific and technological value or significance. In summary:

- a total of 1,345 heritage buildings or structures and 1,774 archaeological sites have been identified;
- 193 historic heritage sites are protected by the three district councils through their district plans;
- the New Plymouth District Council has identified 80 Category A heritage buildings which have not been damaged over this period, although a number of category B and C heritage buildings have been destroyed;
- archaeological sites in Taranaki are susceptible to damage from land uses and development and a number have suffered damage from stock, erosion, bulldozing for farm tracks, or in some cases by earthworks for buildings, roads and quarries.

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AMENITY VALUES

Amenity values are those natural and physical qualities and characteristics that contribute to people's appreciation and enjoyment of the environment. Taranaki residents place high value on the region's clean and quiet environment, the scenic, aesthetic and recreational opportunities provided by parks, reserves, farmland, waterways, coastal areas, bush and walkways, a pleasant environment free of nuisance from excessive noise and odour, and attractive development of the built environment. Community facilities such as sporting and entertainment venues, libraries and museums also contribute to attractive towns and urban areas and their cultural and recreational attributes.

Over the past five years there has been continued provision, development or upgrading of a number of community recreational and cultural facilities such as events centres, the coastal walkway, public gardens and upgrades of most business districts in the region.



From every angle Mount Taranaki dominates the landscape.

OUR LANDSCAPE, HERITAGE AND AMENITY VALUES

Taranaki's landscapes, historic heritage and amenity values are important aspects of the environment because they contribute to our quality and enjoyment of life. These features or values hold important social, emotional, historical or cultural significance to people living within and outside the region – and they make Taranaki unique. They are also important economically, attracting many domestic and international visitors to the region.

Mount Taranaki, a landscape of national and international significance, dominates the Taranaki landscape and is the subject of many pictures and postcards. Taranaki's rural hill country landscapes, coastal and marine natural features and rivers and lakes are also distinctive and highly valued. They form an integral part of the region's identity, natural character and appeal. Many have cultural significance for Māori.

The Taranaki region has significant historic heritage resources that provide important links with the past and contribute to an understanding of our history. Historic buildings, structures, places, wāhi tapu and other sites have archaeological, historic, architectural and cultural value. For example, many pre-European archaeological sites include middens, ovens, village or pā sites and urupā (burial grounds). Remnants of early European history include features associated with timber extraction, railway construction, land wars and dairying.

Various use and development activities can impact on landscape, heritage and amenity values. For example, increasing levels of subdivision and building development can impact on landscape values. Site-specific developments may affect wāhi tapu, archaeological sites, heritage buildings and neighbourhood amenity values. Activities such as building, quarrying, logging, grazing and roading development can have varying effects depending on the scale and location of the activity and the degree of sensitivity of the surrounding environment in which

the development takes place. Some development activities can also enhance historic and amenity values by protecting or improving those values.

One of the challenges of effectively managing landscape, heritage and amenity values is that it is often hard to define these values. There may also be a lack of information and awareness of important sites or values. For example, archaeological sites may show indistinct surface features not easily recognised by landowners or may not be visible under vegetation. Good information is necessary to define sites, areas or values, and advice and assistance to landowners and owners of heritage buildings or structures are required to assist in the protection of these values.

7.1 WHAT IS THE STATE OF NATURAL FEATURES AND LANDSCAPES?

The term 'landscape' refers generally to a combination of traits that distinguish a particular area. These include landform (which reflects topography, geology etc.), land cover (including vegetation and water bodies) and land use (such as farming). Spiritual and cultural associations that give added meaning to places are also components of landscape¹.

The protection of outstanding natural features and landscapes from inappropriate subdivision, use and development is a matter of national importance under the Resource Management Act. However, there is no universally accepted definition of outstanding natural features and landscapes. What is outstanding is a subjective judgement which depends on social and cultural perceptions. Landscape is an aspect of the environment that includes natural and physical features as well as social and cultural factors. Important criteria for assessing the significance of natural features and landscapes include:

- natural science factors such as geology and topography and ecological and dynamic components;
- aesthetic values, including memorability and naturalness;
- expressiveness – how obviously the landscape demonstrates the formative processes leading to it;
- transient values such as the occasional presence of wildlife or its values at certain times of the day or year;
- value to tangata whenua; and
- historical associations².

Because landscape assessment involves subjective judgements, it is not possible to apply strictly quantitative measures to describe the current state or condition of natural features and landscapes in Taranaki. However, there are recognised techniques of assessment and evaluation used by landscape architects and other experts in the field. We do know through various studies, public surveys and consultation processes that many natural features and landscapes in Taranaki are highly valued for their scenic, visual or aesthetic appeal or for their social, cultural and historical associations. We know that Mount Taranaki is a landscape of national and international significance³ and that many other features and landscapes maintain a quality and condition that make them of regional significance.

1 Ministry for the Environment, 2000. *The Impact of Development on Rural Landscape Values*.
2 Pigeon Bay Aquaculture Ltd v Canterbury Regional Council 1999 NZRMA 209, Environment Court.
3 Department of Conservation, 2002. *Egmont National Park Management Plan 2002-2012*