

**WORKSHOP 4- WASTEWATER AND PROJECT WEST**  
 (Craig Molloy, **ProjectWest, Watercare**)

The major issue identified in this workshop for wastewater control was the quality of the receiving waters.

There were two major impacts:

- ❑ Limitation of recreational opportunities through closure of beaches after rain.
- ❑ Effects on marine life, particularly shellfish.

Nutrient outputs from sewage effluent discharges also lead to algal blooms -but not all are toxic. They can be visible indicators of nutrient enrichment. Unscreened overflows of sewage also create an aesthetic problem of objectionable material and smells.

Priorities determined by **Watercare** were:

- ❑ Aesthetics
- ❑ Recreational restrictions
- ❑ Early warning signs such as algal blooms

All these priorities required major dollar amounts to remedy.

Public concern was also a factor -particularly on the North Shore -where warning signs go up every time there is a heavy rain event. There was the perception that there was a lot of talk and no action in 1999 and this has created a public backlash.

The infrastructure of wastewater operations in Auckland is as follows:

OPERATORS	REGULATORS	FINANCIERS
Watercare -wholesale Supply/disposal	ARC Health Dept	Infrastructure AKLD
North Shore City	All TLA's	Transport
Auckland City (Metrowater)		Stormwater
Manukau City		
Waitakere City (Ecowater)		
Papakura District (United Water)		

**Watercare** takes wastewater from other operations on the southern shore and treats before discharge.

TLA's are customers, owners and regulators -this leads to difficulties in TLA's identifying which hat they are wearing when dealing with **Watercare**.

Infrastructure Auckland was born out of the Auckland Regional Services Trust- this was meant to be sold off to the public but the Alliance members of the Trust resisted. The value of its assets trebled and became an embarrassment. Infrastructure Auckland was set up through a political compromise to inherit these assets. Infrastructure Auckland is an infrastructure "bank" -it is capital rich and has a good cashflow. However it is still free to sell its assets such as the Ports of Auckland.

The relationship of **Watercare** and **Metrowater** as **LATES** (Local Authority Trading Enterprises) was discussed.

It was said that **Metrowater** has given LATES a "bad name". **Metrowater** sells services directly to the public where as **Watercare** sells to the local authorities. The public didn't like the high profile TV campaign of **Metrowater** on wastewater charging. This publicity used up ratepayer funds.

It also attracted a great deal of negative publicity about customer resistance to wastewater charges/turning off water supply of customers who refused to pay. Auckland City Council was said to have the reputation of interfering constantly in **Metrowater** affairs [there is always an ACC employee at **Metrowater** meetings.] ACC had also interfered by changing wastewater charging to a rating option.

**Watercare**, by contrast, was said to keep out of politics and run a very stable institution.

An emerging issue with the Growth Strategy is the situation of the Franklin district which is split between Auckland region and Waikato. However the projected growth areas are in Auckland. This is said to lead to **Watercare** developing a regional model to determine future wastewater and stormwater treatment with increasing population growth.

Other issues mentioned were ;

- Auckland sewage overflows to the harbour every time it rains significantly.
- 20-30% of total sewage is probably untreated.

### **Project West**

**Project West** is designed to service the needs of the North western part of Auckland.

**Watercare** sought a site for a treatment plant worth \$450m.

The Environment Court had given strong direction to **Watercare** to get on and do it.

There is a need to focus on a desired quality of the receiving environments in order to determine the level of treatment and hence level of investment. It was said that no one agency is willing to take a lead role on this issue. It may take up to \$10m to resolve decision-making at a regional-integrative level- currently there are ad hoc strategies in place from agencies such as **Watercare**, ACC, North Shore City etc.

There was a question about how infrastructure funding compares the different types of projects (transport initiatives vs wastewater treatment) in a common way?

Ways and means of comparison of large projects were discussed to determine priorities. There was no overall conclusion but a stimulating discussion on the merits of consultation, input of politicians, and the merits of involving local communities in addressing local impacts/problems.

There was some recognition that consultation may be less effective at a regional level due to the complexity of issues, a larger cross-section of values and personal experience of benefits and costs being more distant.

Some decision criteria were mapped as below:

**INTEGRATED OBJECTIVES**

