

WHAT IS AN AEE?

An AEE is a statement of the effects of a proposed activity on the environment. It:

- increases understanding of the environmental effects of what you are proposing to do
- identifies alternative ways to avoid, remedy or mitigate adverse effects on the environment (see below)
- helps you take others' views into account
- can result in a better design of your proposal

HOW DO I PREPARE AN AEE?

Step 1: Identify the activities for which Resource Consent is sought

Fully understanding the environmental effects of an activity is essential for the proper preparation of an AEE. You will need to think about your proposal and how it will change the site you intend to use/develop and how it will affect the site and the surrounding environment of the area.

Step 2: Inspect/describe the site

Even if you already own and live on the site, you need to think about its physical limitations and locality. For example: Is the site flat or sloping? Are there any significant trees or vegetation? Are there any unusual features? What is on the neighbouring properties? Is there access to Council services such as water and sewerage.

Step 3: Talk to staff at the Council

Once you have done your homework it is a good idea to talk to someone at the Council. The Council is likely to have pamphlets, checklists and forms to help you prepare an AEE. If you don't know how to use a regional/district plan, ask the Council staff to help you.

A word of warning: the Council may charge for information and time spent helping you, if this involves a large amount of staff time. You need to prepare an AEE yourself, Council staff cannot prepare it for you.

Step 4: Identify the environmental effects

Understand the environmental issues arising from your proposal.

WHAT IS AN ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECT?

An environmental effect is any change to the environment created by an activity.

This includes effects on ecosystems, natural resources (land, air and water), buildings and people. Environmental effects can be:

- positive or negative
- temporary or permanent
- past, present or future
- cumulative (occur over time or in combination with other effects)
- of high probability
- of low probability or high impact

Some examples are: increases in traffic, soil erosion, changes to the character of the street or landscape, noise, silt run-off, dust, blocked views, shading, degradation of historic or cultural sites, vegetation loss, decreases in water quality/quantity, loss of privacy, odour, visual impact, changes to coastal procedures, discharge of contaminants into air/water, loss of recreational values.

AEE's should anticipate the unexpected. You need to look for specific environmental effects arising from your proposal in combination with the site and its locality. Once you have identified the actual and potential effects, you should consider how significant they are likely to be. You should also use the above list to help you consider the nature of the effects as well as their scale, intensity, duration and frequency.

For example: an extension to an existing building may result in the following effects:

- temporary effects (while the extension is being built) – dust, noise and fewer parking spaces
- permanent effects – loss of privacy, shading, visual effects and the loss of significant trees
- cumulative effects – change in street character and loss of urban vegetation

Step 5: Re-evaluate your proposal. Use the AEE process to help design your proposal.

You may decide that some environmental effects will be significant and that you need to change your proposal to avoid, remedy or mitigate them. You should then think about alternative ways to achieve the same goals while considering the environmental effects each alternative may have. This process can result in a 'win-win' situation, with better proposal design and better environmental outcomes.

WHAT DOES 'AVOID, REMEDY OR MITIGATE' MEAN?

These are terms in the Resource Management Act. Each represents a different way of addressing an adverse effect so it is acceptable.

For example: Adverse visual effect of a gravel or rock quarry.

You would **avoid** the visual effect if you did not quarry or the quarry was located out of site.

You would **remedy** the visual effect if you filled in the hole.

You would **mitigate** the visual effect if you planted trees around the hole.

All these actions may address the adverse effect, but all three outcomes may not be acceptable to the community. It is the role of the AEE to work out whether an effect needs to be addressed, and the best way of doing this.

Step 6: Finalising the AEE: What do I need to include?

The amount of information should correspond to the scale and significance of the effects.

You need to include enough information in your AEE so that the Council can evaluate your proposal. The amount of information should correspond to the scale and significance of the environmental effects that may be generated by your proposal. Some proposals will require more detail and more analysis than others. For example, adding a carport onto the side of a house is likely to require much less information and detail than a multi storey development in an area that is valued for its natural attributes.

WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO CONSIDER?

Communicate openly with interested or potentially affected people and groups.

Talking to your neighbours, iwi groups and other interested or affected parties about your proposal may have on others. Although not required by law, it is a good idea to talk to people early on in the process.

Use the Plan to identify what your AEE might need to address.

The Southland District Plan should help you to identify what you need to put in your AEE. You should use the plan to help you understand how important the issues arising from your proposal are likely to be.

Status of Activities in Plans

The status of the activity will also make a difference to what you should include in your AEE.

Controlled and restricted discretionary activities – the Council can only consider matters listed in its plan when deciding whether to grant your resource consent. Your AEE should focus only on the matters in the plan.

Discretionary or non-complying activities – you need to consider fully all the environmental effects you have identified arising from your proposal (these are not limited by what is in the plan). You are therefore likely to need a more substantial AEE.

Complex Applications

For more complex applications, you may need to get specialist advice. There are a number of professionals who assist in preparing AEEs, such as engineers and resource management consultants. Council staff may be able to tell you if you need specialist advice and who would be best to help you.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I DON'T PREPARE A GOOD AEE?

It is NOT adequate to state in your AEE that there are NO environmental effects.

It is important that you provide the Council with a well prepared AEE.

Otherwise the Council may:

- not accept your resource consent application.
- turn down your resource consent application.
- impose a lot of conditions on your resource consent.
- ask you for more information, delaying the time taken to process your application.
- commission someone else to review your application at a cost to you.

For more detailed information, see the Ministry for the Environment's Good Practice Guide on How to Prepare an AEE and its brochure on Making Resource Consent Applications.

YOUR AEE NEEDS TO INCLUDE:

- a full description of the proposal, including the site and locality (including a site plan and plans of your proposal)
- a description of the environmental effects, including the significance and nature of the effects (address specific environmental effects that you have identified as well as referring to issues identified in the district and/or regional plan).
- a description of alternatives to avoid, remedy or mitigate any significant environmental effects.
- an assessment of any risks to the environment that may arise from hazardous substances and/or the discharge of contaminants
- a record of any consultation, including names and views of people you talked with
- a discussion of any effects that may need to be controlled or monitored, how the control or monitoring will be carried out and by whom.

You should also refer to the Fourth Schedule of the Resource Management Act 1991. This sets out matters that should be included and considered when preparing an AEE



ASSESSMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS



If you are applying for resource consent you will need to prepare an Assessment of Environmental Effects (AEE).

A resource consent is permission from a Council to do something that might affect the environment, or permission to use a resource in some way. Preparing an AEE is only one step in making a resource consent application.

It is up to you to provide an AEE statement with your resource consent application. The Council is not able to process your application without an AEE.

**ANY QUERIES?
PLEASE CONTACT THE COUNCIL'S RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT TEAM
ON 0800 732 732**