



*Ministry for the*  
**Environment**  
*Manatū Mō Te Taiao*

# **Resource Consent Analysis**

**A study investigating the nature of resource consents lodged with 20 local authorities over a two-month period**

Prepared for the Ministry for the Environment by  
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# Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of a study investigating the nature of resource consents lodged with 20 local authorities over a two-month period in 2005.

The study involved looking at the proportion of resource consent applications lodged by ‘RMA professionals’, the ‘general public’ and ‘other professionals’. Each application was also allocated to a group depending on the type of activity to which the consent was required. The Ministry for the Environment selected participating councils and provided the relevant data.

For the purposes of this study:

- ‘RMA professionals’ are defined as including planners and surveyors only.
- ‘Other professionals’ are defined as including other professionals involved with the RMA, such as engineers, architects, landscape architects, lawyers and any other professional not represented in other categories.
- ‘General public’ is defined as including members of the general public only.

Key findings from this study were as follows:

- Just over a quarter (26%) of all resource consent applications were lodged by ‘RMA professionals’; 36% of all consent applications were lodged by the ‘general public’, and the largest proportion (38%) of all application were lodged by ‘other professionals’.
- A significant proportion (81%) of all resource consent applications were made at district/city councils.
- The most commonly represented resource consent application type across all councils was applications for building or related activities, accounting for 28% of all resource consents. The second most represented was ‘landscaping’ (19%), followed by ‘subdivision’ attributing for 18% of all resource consents lodged.
- Of the applications made to district/city councils, the largest proportion (39%) was lodged by ‘other professionals’, with the ‘general public’ lodging the second highest proportion (32%), followed by ‘RMA professionals’ representing 29% of applications made to district/city councils.
- Of the applications made to district/city councils, the most commonly represented RMA professional lodging applications was the surveyor attributing to 71% of all applications lodged by RMA professionals, with planners making up the other 29%.
- Of the applications made to district/city councils, the most commonly represented ‘other professional’ was the ‘other’ group (builders, arborists, project managers, investment groups, etc) which contributed a large proportion (60%) of applications lodged by ‘other professionals’. Architects were the second largest representation (20%) in the ‘other professional’ category, followed by engineers (18%).
- Of the applications made to regional councils, ‘other professionals’ attributed the largest representation (61%) of applications lodged. The ‘general public’ was the second highest group (23%), with ‘RMA professionals’ attributing the remainder (16%).

- Of the applications made to regional councils, engineers (from the ‘other professionals’ category) were clearly the highest contributor, making 77% of applications from the ‘other professionals’ category and representing an overall 42% of all applications made to regional councils. Planners lodged the majority of resource consents in the ‘RMA professionals’ category (78%), but overall only 13% of all applications made to regional council were made by planners.

# Introduction

This report presents the findings of a study investigating the nature of resource consents lodged with 20 local authorities over the period 1 August 2005–30 September 2005.

The study was commissioned by the Ministry for the Environment as an extension to an earlier study which examined the electronic delivery of Resource Management Act (RMA) services ('e-planning').<sup>1</sup>

Specifically, 'Stage 1' of that earlier study provided a summary of the proportions of resource consent applications lodged by 'RMA professionals' and the 'general public', and the types of consent, over a two-month period with the following 10 councils:

- Auckland Regional Council
- Environment Canterbury
- Auckland City Council
- Hamilton City Council
- Western Bay of Plenty District Council
- Kapiti Coast District Council
- Nelson City Council
- Timaru District Council
- Selwyn District Council
- Dunedin City Council.

The current study represents an extension to this analysis and introduces data from a further 10 councils to obtain a larger sample size and therefore a clearer representation of the type and nature of resource consents lodged during the study period. The further 10 councils include:

- Northland Regional Council
- Invercargill City Council
- Tauranga City Council
- Hutt City Council
- Waipa District Council
- Palmerston North City Council
- Stratford District Council
- Opotiki District
- Kaikoura District Council
- Franklin District Council.

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<sup>1</sup> Ministry for the Environment 'E-Planning Study', prepared by Boulder Planning (Otago) Ltd, March 2006.

# Methodology

This study involved categorising each resource consent application by using the following five steps:

1. Determine whether the resource consent application was lodged with a regional council or district/city council.
2. Determine whether the resource consent applicant belongs to the ‘RMA professional’, ‘other professional’, or ‘general public’ categories.
3. Determine which subgroup each ‘RMA professional’, belongs to – ‘surveyors’ or ‘planners’.
4. Determine which subgroup each ‘other professional’, belongs to – ‘engineers’, ‘architect’, ‘landscape architect’, ‘lawyers’ or ‘other’.
5. The number and type of resource consent applications were then recorded in the corresponding cells within one of two ‘Excel’ matrices – one for regional councils and the other for district/city councils.

It is noted that the resource consent data from the initial 10 councils (as part of the earlier study previously mentioned)<sup>2</sup> was reclassified and combined with the new resource consent data obtained from the additional 10 councils as part of the current study.

## Notes

### 1. Definition agreed with Ministry

For the purposes of this study:

- ‘RMA professionals’ are defined as including:
  - **Planners:** where an application was clearly made by a planner, irrespective of whether the planner was employed by a planning consultancy or another specialised discipline.
  - **Surveyors:** where an application was clearly made by a surveyor or surveying firm, (where the firm did not appear to specifically employ planners).
- ‘Other professionals’ are defined as including other professionals involved with the RMA, such as engineers, architects, landscape architects, lawyers and any other professional not represented in other categories.
- ‘General public’ is defined as including members of the general public.

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<sup>2</sup> Ministry for the Environment ‘E-Planning Study’, prepared by Boulder Planning (Otago) Ltd, March 2006.



It is noted that the resource consent data from the initial 10 councils (as part of the earlier study previously mentioned)<sup>3</sup> was reclassified and combined with the new resource consent data obtained from the additional 10 councils as part of the current study, in accordance with a revised definition of what constitutes an ‘RMA Professional’ and ‘RMA Professional involved with the RMA’.

## **2. Potential limitations**

There are two areas in the described method to be mindful of when interpreting results:

- 1) Inconsistencies in the way in which councils recorded resource consent information.
- 2) Limitations in data, for example insufficient details surrounding agent details, resource consent details.

For these reasons, the process of categorising the resource consent applicant and nature of resource consent became more of subjective process where there was a level of ambiguity in the data.

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<sup>3</sup> Ministry for the Environment ‘E-Planning Study’, prepared by Boulder Planning (Otago) Ltd, March 2006.

# Summary of Resource Consent Applications

Results data for all resource consents applications lodged with the 20 councils over the study period can be viewed in ‘Matrix 1’ (District/City Councils, page 16) and ‘Matrix 2’ (Regional Councils, page 18).

Key findings are summarised and presented under the following three headings:

- 1) All councils
- 2) Regional councils
- 3) District/city councils.

Relevant proportions are provided where appropriate, and bar graphs are provided to graphically represent and support key findings.

## All councils

In total, 3046 resource consent applications were lodged across all 20 respondent councils over a two-month period. Of this total:

- 583 (19%) of applications were lodged at regional councils
- 2463 (81%) of applications were lodged at district/city councils
- 803 (26%) of applicants were made by ‘RMA professionals’
- 1087 (36%) of applicants were made by the ‘general public’
- 1156 (38%) of applicants were made by ‘other professionals’.

**Figure 1: Summary of resource consents lodged across all 20 councils**

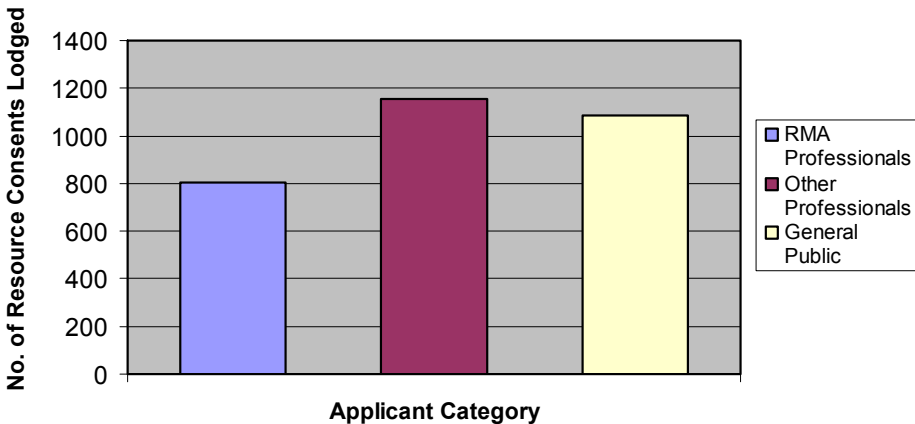


Figure 1 illustrates the differences between the three applicant categories, with ‘Other Professionals’ lodging the largest proportion of resource consents across all councils.

## **Breakdown of applicants**

### **RMA professionals**

803 (26%) of all applicants were represented by ‘RMA professionals’.

The most commonly represented RMA professional across all councils is the surveyor, representing approximately 65% of all applications lodged by ‘RMA professionals’. Planners represented the remainder of RMA professional applications, attributing 35% of all applications lodged by ‘RMA professionals’.

### **Other professionals**

1156 (38%) of all applicants were represented by ‘other professionals’.

Engineers represented 36% of applications lodged by ‘other professionals’, architects 14%, and lawyers and landscape architects both less than 1%.

Notably, the highest proportion of applications represented (48%) were lodged by ‘other professionals’ less typically associated with the RMA, including: builders, real estate companies, councils, investment groups, advertising companies, project management companies; electricians, signwriters, farm consultants and arborists.

A large proportion of applications from the ‘other professionals’ category were lodged by agencies or individuals which did not fit into the other generic sub-categories, such as engineers or architects. Within this ‘other’ subcategory, ‘builders’ or ‘building organisations’ contributed to a large percentage of applications lodged, which may provide an explanation for the high occurrence of applications made related to building within the ‘other’ subcategory.

### **General public**

1087 (36%) of all applicants were represented by the ‘general public’.

## **Type of consent application**

The most commonly represented application type across all councils related to the construction, alteration, addition, and relocation etc of a building. Applications of this nature represented approximately 28% of all applications.

The second most commonly represented application type across all councils related to ‘landscaping’, representing 19% of all applications.

Thirdly, ‘subdivision’ applications represented approximately 18% of all applications.

All other application types across the 20 councils were represented by less than 5% each of the total applications, including:

- general activity (5%)
- earthworks (4%)
- property works (3%)
- waste water discharge (3%)
- bore (3%)
- coastal activity (3%)
- signs (2%)
- stormwater discharge (2%)
- water take (2%)
- certificates of compliance (2%)
- water works (2%)
- liquor licenses (1%)
- infrastructure (1%)
- air discharge, land discharge and gravel extraction (all less than 1%).

For further details on each resource consent category, please refer to the matrix ‘note’ section on page 17.

## District/city councils

As indicated above, 81% of all resource applications lodged across all councils were made at district/city councils. The following information provides a summary of these applications, in particular the proportions of applications made by ‘RMA professionals’, ‘other professionals’, and the ‘general public’, and the relative proportions of each consent type.

**Figure 2: Summary of resource consents lodged at district/city councils**

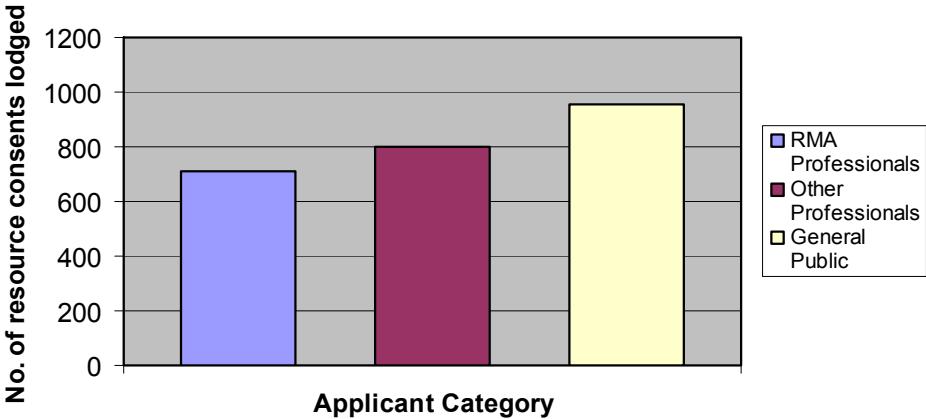


Figure 2 illustrates the differences between the three applicant categories, and shows the general public to have lodged the largest proportion of resource consent applications at district/city councils.

## Breakdown of applicants

Of the applications made at district/city councils, 29% of applicants were ‘RMA professionals’, 32% of applicants were ‘other professionals’, and 38% of applicants were members of the ‘general public’. Table 1 below shows a detailed breakdown of these applicants.<sup>4</sup>

**Table 1: Applications lodged at district/city councils**

Applicant	Percentage of applications lodged at district/city councils
<b>RMA professional</b>	
Surveyors	501 (71%)
Planners	208 (29%)
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>709</b>
<b>Other professionals</b>	
Engineers	143 (18%)
Architects	157 (20%)
Landscape architects	15 (2%)
Lawyers	6 (< 1%)
Other	479 (60%)
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>800</b>
<b>General public</b>	
Public	954 (100%)
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>954</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>2463</b>

### RMA professionals

The most commonly represented RMA professional is the surveyor, representing approximately 71% of all applications lodged by RMA professionals at district/city councils. Planners were the second most represented RMA professional, represented by the remaining 29% of all applications lodged by RMA professionals at the district/city level.

### Other professionals

Within this category, 20% of applications were made by architects, 18% by engineers and lawyers and landscape architects each making less than 5%.

Notably, the highest proportion of applications at the district/city level (60%) was lodged by ‘other professionals’. These are professionals that are less typically associated with making development applications under the RMA, and include builders and building agencies, real estate agencies, project management agencies, arborists, local authorities/councils, investment groups, advertising companies, electricians, signwriters and farm consultants.

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<sup>4</sup> The percentages provided in Table 1 correspond to the percentage of each applicant category within its respective subgrouping, not the total sample.

A large proportion of the ‘other professionals’ applicants were agencies or individuals which did not fit into the other generic subcategories, such as engineers or architects. Within this ‘other’ subcategory, ‘builders’ or ‘building organisations’ contributed to a large percentage of applications lodged, corresponding with the high occurrence of applications made related to building within the ‘other’ subcategory. This may indicate that many applications involving building work are relatively straight forward and need not require the services of an RMA professional.

## **General public**

Members of the general public represented the largest sub-group of applicants at the district/city level with 954 (39%).

## **Type of consent application**

All the applications lodged at district/city councils fall within one of 10 application types/categories.

The most commonly represented consent application type at the district/city councils was applications relating to the construction, alteration, addition, and relocation etc of a building. Applications of this nature represented approximately 34% of all applications.

Applications involving landscaping were the second most commonly represented application type, representing 23% of all applications.

The third most common consent type included subdivision, representing approximately 22% of all applications.

The remaining consent categories were represented by smaller numbers of applications, including:

- general activity – 6%
- property works – 4%
- signs – 3%
- certificates of compliance – 3%
- earthworks – 2%
- liquor licenses – 1%
- infrastructure – 1%.

## **Regional councils**

As indicated above, 19% of all resource applications within the study sample were lodged with regional councils. The following information provides a summary of these applications and in particular the proportions of applications made by ‘RMA professionals’, ‘other professionals’, and the ‘general public’, and the relative proportions of each consent type.

**Figure 3: Summary of resource consents lodged at regional councils**

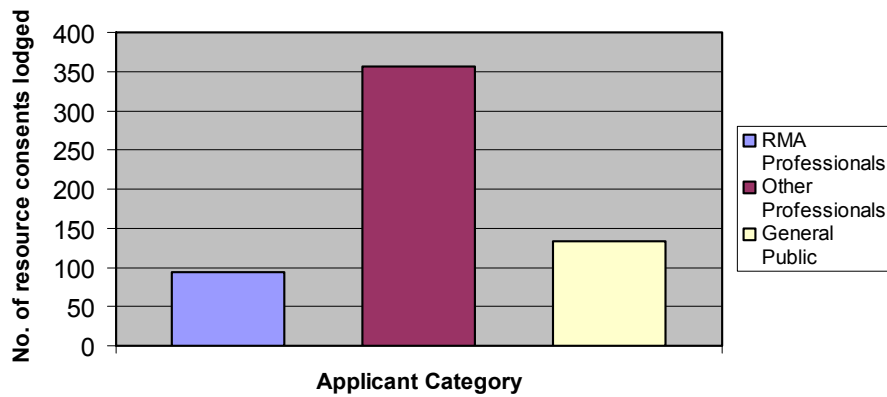


Figure 3 illustrates the difference between the three applicant categories, which shows ‘other professionals’ to have lodged the largest proportion of resource consents at regional councils.

## Breakdown of applicants

Of the applications made at regional councils, 16% of applicants were ‘RMA professionals’, 23% of applicants were members of the ‘general public’ and 61% of applicants were ‘other professionals’.<sup>5</sup>

**Table 2: Applications lodged at regional councils**

Applicant	Percentage of applications lodged at regional councils
<b>RMA professional</b>	
Surveyors	21 (22%)
Planners	73 (78%)
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>94</b>
<b>Other professionals</b>	
Engineers	274 (77%)
Architects	4 (1%)
Lawyers	2 (<1%)
Others	76 (21%)
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>356</b>
<b>General public</b>	
Public	133 (100%)
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>133</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>583</b>

<sup>5</sup> The percentages provided in Table 1 correspond to the percentage of each applicant category within its respective subgrouping, not the total sample.

## **RMA professionals**

The most commonly represented RMA professional is the planner, representing approximately 73% of applications lodged by RMA professionals at regional councils.

Surveyors were the second most represented RMA professional, representing the remaining 21% of applications lodged by RMA professionals at regional councils.

## **Other professionals**

Of the ‘other professionals’ involved with the RMA, engineers represented the majority of applications lodged by ‘other professionals’ at the regional level, with 77% of applications.

Notably, the second most commonly represented subgroup of applicants at the regional level (21%) were lodged by ‘others’ less typically associated with the RMA, including: builders, regional and local authorities, development and investment agencies, and infrastructure and industry organisations.

Architects and lawyers each represented less than 1% of applications lodged by ‘other professionals’ at the regional level.

## **General public**

Members of the general public represented the second largest subgroup of applicants at the regional level with 133 applications (23%).

## **Type of consent application**

All the applications lodged at regional councils fall within one of 10 application types/categories.

The most commonly represented application type at the regional level included applications for ‘waste water discharge’ and ‘coastal activities’, each representing 16% of all applications made at the regional level, followed closely by applications relating to ‘bore’ activity at 15% of all applications made at the regional level.

Applications relating to ‘stormwater discharges’ and ‘earthworks’ each represented approximately 11% of all applications, followed by applications relating to ‘water take’ (10%), and ‘water works’ (8%).

The remaining consent categories were represented by smaller numbers of applications, including:

- air discharge – 5%
- land discharge – 5%
- gravel extraction – 3%.



# Conclusions

Of all the resource consent applications lodged across 20 councils over a two-month period:

- Just over a quarter (26%) of all resource consent applications were lodged by ‘RMA professionals’; 36% of all consent applications were lodged by the ‘general public’, and the largest proportion (38%) of all application were lodged by ‘other professionals’.
- A significant proportion (81%) of all resource consent applications were made at district/city councils.
- The most commonly represented resource consent application type across all councils was applications for building or related activities, accounting for 28% of all resource consents. The second most represented was ‘landscaping’ (19%), followed by ‘subdivision’ attributing for 18% of all resource consents lodged.
- Of the applications made to district/city councils, the largest proportion (39%) was lodged by ‘other professionals’, with the ‘general public’ lodging the second highest proportion (32%), followed by ‘RMA professionals’ representing 29% of applications made to district/city councils.
- Of the applications made to district/city councils, the most commonly represented RMA professional lodging applications was the surveyor attributing to 71% of all applications lodged by RMA professionals, with planners making up the other 29%.
- Of the applications made to district/city councils, the most commonly represented ‘other professional’ was the ‘other’ group (builders, arborists, project managers, investment groups etc) which contributed a large proportion (60%) of applications lodged by ‘other professionals’. Architects were the second largest representation (20%) in the ‘other professionals’ category, followed by engineers (18%).
- Of the applications made to regional councils, ‘other professionals’ attributed the largest representation (61%) of applications lodged. The ‘general public’ was the second highest group (23%), with ‘RMA professionals’ attributing the remainder (16%).
- Of the applications made to regional councils, engineers (from the ‘other professionals’ category) were clearly the highest contributor, making 77% of applications from the ‘other professionals’ category and representing an overall 42% of all applications made to regional councils. Planners lodged the majority of resource consents in the ‘RMA professionals’ category (78%), but overall only 13% of all applications made to regional council were made by planners.

# Results Matrix 1: Resource Consent Applications at District/City Councils

Applicant		Application type										
Category	Subcategory	Subdivision	Building	Earthworks	Landscaping	Liquor	COC	Signs	General activity	Infra-structure	Property works	Total
RMA professionals	Surveyors	409	56	2	2	0	6	0	9	1	16	501
	Planners	9	95	5	21	0	12	10	34	9	13	208
	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>418</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>709</b>
General public	Public	37	372	19	384	13	16	16	54	1	42	954
	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>372</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>954</b>
Other professionals	Engineers	54	25	8	6	0	7	17	8	16	2	143
	Architects	3	120	7	4	0	4	3	4	1	11	157
	LS architects	1	3	0	6	0	0	0	0	1	4	15
	Lawyers	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	6
	Other	19	170	11	152	18	27	29	32	3	18	479
	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>800</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>535</b>	<b>843</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>575</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>2463</b>

## District/city council notes:

'Subdivision' – includes boundary adjustments and section 226 certificates.

'Building' – includes any application relating to the development of buildings (e.g. relocation, construction, alteration, additions, dwelling in setback etc).

'Landscaping' – mostly relates to applications made to the Auckland City Council to cut down trees.

'COC' – relates to code of compliance requirements and certificates.

'General activity' – relates to unnamed activities for which consent was sought, such as commercial activity in a commercial zone. Other examples of 'general activities' include: processing of olives for cosmetic products, free-range chicken activity, harvesting, oil exploration, or change of land use.

'Infrastructure' – majority of infrastructure applications relate to services such as, telecommunication facilities, and road alterations and extensions.

'Property works' – relates to general works undertaken on a property that do not fall within any other categories, including: retaining walls, car parking requirements and vehicle crossings, and any other activities on a property which do not relate to the alteration to a dwelling and/or any other application type, for example, excavation within archaeological site to remove fuel tanks.

'Other professionals' – relates to all other professionals not described in other categories, including: builders and building agencies, real estate agencies, project management agencies, arborists, local authorities/councils, investment groups, advertising companies, electricians, signwriters and farm consultants.

# Results Matrix 2: Resource Consent Applications at Regional Councils

Applicant		Application type										
Category	Sub-category	Storm water discharge	Waste water discharge	Water take	Water works	Air discharge	Earth-works	Bore	Land discharge	Coastal activity	Gravel extraction	Total
RMA professionals	Surveyors	4	3	0	8	0	3	0	3	0	0	21
	Planners	12	0	14	5	1	13	1	4	22	1	73
	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>94</b>
General public	Public	4	21	21	6	3	7	31	6	31	3	133
	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>133</b>
Other professionals	Engineers	38	65	19	18	12	30	49	8	33	2	274
	Architects	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	4
	Lawyers	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2
	Other	5	2	5	8	11	13	5	10	7	10	76
	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>356</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>64</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>583</b>

## Regional council notes:

'Coastal activity' – includes any activity undertaken in the coastal marine area.

'Land discharge' – includes any activity involving discharges of waste to land (but not including any earthworks covered by earthworks consents at district/city councils).

'Stormwater discharge' – activities involving the management and collection of run-off from land and urban development.

'Wastewater discharge' – activities generally involving effluent disposal.

'Other professional' – relates to all other professionals not described in other categories, including: builders, regional and local authorities, development and investment agencies, and infrastructure and industry organisations.