

Sustainable Environment Awards Evening 2007

DRAFT speech notes

Michael Lee, ARC Chairman

9 August 6pm, Hopetoun Alpha

Michael Lee, Chairman ARC

Welcome and thank you all for coming tonight to celebrate and share in the successes of the Auckland region's community environmental achievements.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

During the last five years, the ARC has been working closely with people on the ground, in the community to supporting local environmental projects.

The ARC is committed to working in partnership with citizens to achieve our goals – which are also your goals.

In no other area is our commitment to working alongside the public more evident than in the case of local environmental action. The ARC works

with many community groups, who look after the regions streams, beaches and nature areas, in all kinds of different and innovative ways.

Over the last five years the ARC has noticed a much greater interest and many more people wanting to get involved in local environmental action.

That is great news for all of us and for the future of our region. This is a positive and growing trend.

- In 1995 the ARC was working with just two Care groups; today we work with close to 200!
- 116 schools in the region are involved in the Enviroschools programme, of which three have achieved impressive green gold status
- Over 40,000 individuals have joined the ARC's Sustainable Neighbourhoods Big Clean Up programme.
- In recent years, with the growth of our Environmental Initiatives Fund, thanks to sponsor Honda (the Honda Treefund), and an increase in general funding from the ARC – we have seen a record number of EIF applications.
- The EIF was established in 2000 and many outstanding projects have been supported through this fund.
- In its first year we received 58 applications.

- In 2005 we got 173 applications, and this year we received a remarkable 266 applications!

The high calibre of the finalist in this year's Sustainable Environment Awards is not surprising. A growing number of individuals, groups, schools, businesses and agencies in the Auckland region are committed to enhancing and improving the quality of the region's environment.

Our citizen environmentalists include farmers and rural workers who go out of their way to take the environment into account in their daily work, urban volunteers who spend their free time conserving and improving small but vital areas of their local environment and schools, often driven by teachers who are passionate about inspiring the next generation, and engendering in them a love and respect for the natural world we have inherited.

And our next generation of young people are contributing and in many cases leading, a whole raft of conservation actions and advocacy.

Private sector and public sector agencies are working together in large and small projects throughout the Auckland region and showing how

environmental objectives can be integrated into everyday best business practice.

What you will see in our regional finalists tonight is that perseverance, tenacity, leading by example and working in partnership are all important factors in success.

To the finalists here tonight; I know that your work is often unsung, and on behalf of ARC, I thank you all for your efforts.

The ARC is committed to working alongside our citizens to care for our environment, to make Auckland a better place to live and with an enhanced quality of life. Tonight is about celebrating the achievements of our finalists - thank you for your hard work, drive and determination to care for our environment. You are making a difference, and the biggest winner is the environment.