



## ENERGY

# ARC keeps gas power-station at arm's length

by Wayne Thompson

The Auckland Regional Council says it will not process resource consents for a power station in northwest Rodney while there are questions over the impact of the station's greenhouse gas emissions.

The council's strategy and planning committee yesterday showed it shared the reluctance of Rodney District councillors to take the responsibility of processing applications to establish a gas-fired station, which is said to be able to give Auckland and Northland security of supply.

Rodney councillors took the rare step of refusing to use their power to publicly notify Genesis Energy's bid to have a special zone for a 240-megawatt station between Helensville and Kaukapakapa.

Instead, they asked for a ministerial "call-in" of the application because it was of national rather than local importance and better suited to a board of inquiry, or the Environment Court.

Rodney wrote about public concern over the station's effect on local and global environments. The station would produce between 0.76 and 1.74 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> a year — about 1 to 2.3 per cent of the country's total annual greenhouse gas emissions.

No response has been received from the Environment Ministry and some ARC officers yesterday argued it was not necessary or appropriate to call in the project and take it out of local hands.

However, the Rodney representative on the ARC, Christine Rose, said it was not clear whether the law allowed or required consideration of climate change effects in the consideration of air discharge consents.

Mrs Rose said the committee supported a moratorium on processing applications of thermal power stations until there was an appropriate framework for considering greenhouse emissions.

Genesis Energy spokesman Richard Gordon said the committee's decision did not create any more problems or delays for the project because it was waiting for the minister's decision on the Rodney request for a call-in on the zone change.

The state-owned generator was also waiting for a Court of Appeal hearing next month to decide whether regional or district councils should take climate change effects of greenhouse gas emissions into account when deciding resource consents.

It would be some time before the court issued its decision.

By then the Government's energy strategy would be out and the emissions trading scheme details would be known.

If the court decision went in favour of the defendant, Greenpeace, then Genesis would have to prepare another large parcel of evidence and provide documents and argument around climate change impact.

Early last month, the Environment Minister announced a call-in of Transpower's application for a new electricity transmission line from South Waikato to Auckland.

Regional council and Rodney officers said a call-in would shorten the resource consent process by cutting out the council hearing and subsequent appeal to the Environment Court.

However, it allowed cross-examination of witnesses, which might put people off.