

NEWS RELEASE

NEW ZEALAND
**Planning
Council**

*Te Kaunihera Whakakaupapa
Mo Aotearoa*

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NEED FOR NEW ZEALAND PERSPECTIVE ON NUCLEAR WAR

Radioactive fallout would be among the least of New Zealand's worries if there was a nuclear war, according to the Planning Council report New Zealand After Nuclear War which was released today.

The study revealed that the New Zealand public do not realise how different New Zealand's circumstances would be from those in the Northern Hemisphere. "Our message about radioactive fallout is by no means a new one but we couldn't just assume that people fully understood the nature of radioactive fallout," said principal researcher Dr Wren Green. "So, a survey was carried out for the Planning Council by AGB:McNair to find out how much the public knew already about the effects of nuclear war. "The effect of a nuclear war would be very great indeed but not for the reason many people think", he said.

Nearly half the people questioned in the survey picked radioactive fallout as the most serious of a set of consequences of nuclear war for New Zealand.

"The study, New Zealand After Nuclear War, released today attempts to correct such misunderstandings," said Planning Council Director Peter Rankin. "Radioactive fallout does not spread evenly over the world in the way that people commonly think. New Zealand would only receive a minute percent of global fallout because of weather patterns and the way radioactive fallout behaves. It's very important that people know that we would be likely to survive a nuclear war and therefore would have to face some very grim prospects. In some ways it's easier to do nothing about nuclear war if you

think the human race will be destroyed than if you know you would have to face grim survival," he said.

Principal researcher, Dr Wren Green explained that "contrary to popular belief, there would be such a small amount of radioactive fallout reaching New Zealand, even if Australia were bombed, that there would be say a 1% rise in the cases of cancer over several decades. This is not a large number and they would not all be fatal," he said. This calculation depends on New Zealand not being a target and the report bases such an assumption on the fact that there are many thousands of targets of greater strategic importance to nuclear armed countries than New Zealand which has no nuclear weapons, communications facilities or other likely targets.

The report suggests that the reason for this misunderstanding is that most of our information - especially movies and television comes from the northern hemisphere and that it therefore portrays a northern hemisphere picture.

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