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Nuclear war findings 'surprise'

Auckland (PA). — The Planning Council's report "New Zealand after a Nuclear War," had come as a surprise to those who believed they would not survive such a confrontation, one of its authors told a seminar on the subject on Sunday.

The seminar, organised by the Down Under Survival Committee, was addressed by several speakers including Civil Defence national director Edward Latter and Dr Wren Green.

Dr Green was the principal author of the Planning Council report, which was released last month as a preliminary study into New Zealand's chance of surviving a Northern Hemisphere nuclear war.

The study, funded by part of the French reparations to New Zealand for the sinking of the Rainbow Warrior, found that New Zealand would escape the worst effects of radiation fallout and nuclear winter, but would suffer from an almost total loss of trade and communications with the outside world.

"I think we have jolted a lot of people into thinking very realistically about survival," Dr Green said. "It will be grim and nasty, but just how much will depend on the ways we respond as a society."

Dr Green said more public education about the report was needed to encourage people to make submissions on its findings.

ANALYSED

Submissions should be made to the Environment Ministry by November 27. They will be analysed by an interdepartmental committee and reported to Cabinet by early next year. A specialist unit of about nine people will then be set up to

co-ordinate further research.

Dr Green said he hoped the Government would spend at least \$600,000 a year over the next three years on this second phase of the nuclear aftermath study.

But the level of Government commitment would depend on the number and quality of submissions received.

He said particular groups he hoped would make submissions were manufacturers, health professionals, unionists, Maori and Pacific Islanders and welfare and education specialists.

In making their submissions, people should realise there would be no return to "normalcy" in New Zealand after nuclear war.

"This raises the very important question of what we are planning for? Is law and order a priority, or keeping the supply lines to the cities, or building community cohesion?"

Planning should encompass immediate emergency measures and long-term social restructuring.

Dr Green said the success of the plans would be linked to the way they were decided.

"I would hate to see this phase disappear into bureaucracy. The process must involve the community at all levels."

The director of Civil Defence, Mr Latter, reminded the seminar that his organisation had disaster plans "up and running" at a decentralised, community level.

They could be added to help deal with a nuclear war crisis.

He also reminded the seminar that contingency plans needed statutory backing. Civil Defence had "draconian" legal powers to block roads, requisition supplies or relocate people in the case of national emergencies, he said.