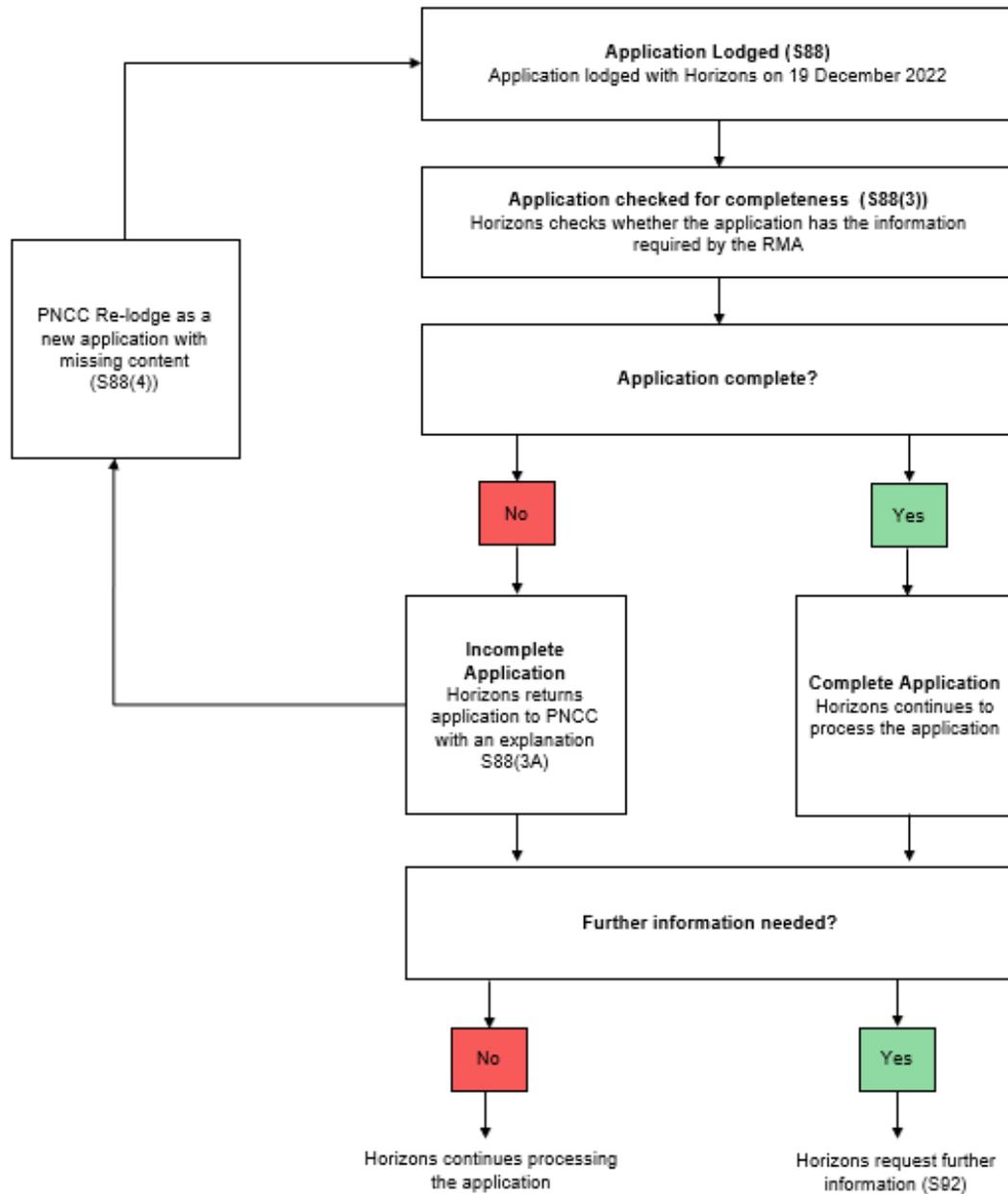


The Resource Consenting process for Nature Calls

RMA Resource Consent Process from Application Lodgement to Further Information Request



Some Q+A's on consenting

What is an MCA?

MCA is short for Multi Criteria Assessment. MCA is a well-accepted tool for selecting a preferred option. We used this tool to help select the BPO for Council's new wastewater scheme. An MCA involves developing assessment criteria and having experts (e.g. water quality scientists, soil scientists, cultural experts, public health experts etc.) assess options based on the criteria. These assessments are then presented at a workshop and participants score options based on the information presented by the experts and determine a preferred option. MCAs are designed to bring rigor and structure to option decision making.

How do resource consents work?

A resource consent is a permission under the RMA to undertake an activity. In the case of Council's new wastewater scheme a number of activities require consent (e.g. discharges to water, land and air and a new river discharge structure). An application for a resource consent must include an assessment of the effects of the activities on the environment. This is a requirement of the RMA. A resource consent when granted will include conditions usually designed to mitigate any adverse effects of an activity on the environment. The consent holder must ensure all the conditions are met otherwise they could be prosecuted under the RMA.

What is section 88?

Section 88 of the RMA is the section under which an application is made to a consent authority (in our case Horizons). It requires applications to include particular information including an assessment of effects on the environment. Section 88 also requires the consent authority (e.g. Horizons) to check an application to see if it has all the information the RMA requires. If the consent authority determines an application is incomplete, it must be returned to the applicant and the consent authority must set out why the application is incomplete. If the applicant still wants to go ahead with the proposed activity, then new application must be lodged.

We are doing everything possible to ensure Horizons accepts our application as complete and this includes having regular meetings with Horizons consenting team. If Horizons returns the application due to incompleteness it will be very important to understand the reasons provided by Horizons for taking this action and making sure the reasons are addressed in the new application.

What is section 92

If a consent authority decides an application is complete, the next step is for it to consider whether the application contains enough information to understand the effects the proposed activity could have on the environment. If the consent authority considers the application is missing some information, it makes a request under section 92 of the RMA to the applicant to provide the missing information. Section 92 requests are quite common especially for applications on the scale required for Council's new wastewater scheme.

Why have we only had one year to prepare and lodge the resource consent application?

In 2015 Horizons reviewed the conditions of our current consent to discharge treated wastewater to the Manawatū River. As part of that review process new conditions were included in the consent that required Council to go through the BPO process to select a new wastewater scheme. The conditions included a timeline for making the BPO decision and a requirement to lodge the new resource consents for the BPO within one year of making the decision. There has been some slippage in the timeline due to COVID and Council has agreed with Horizons to lodge the application by 19 December 2022.