

Room invites input and discussion

Concept connects people with issues

THE Situation Room is a space in the city that uses visual information to display issues facing our region, and because it encourages audience input it is constantly evolving.

Located on Victoria St, The Situation Room is a space where a number of different ideas based around the environment and the economy can be viewed and discussed.

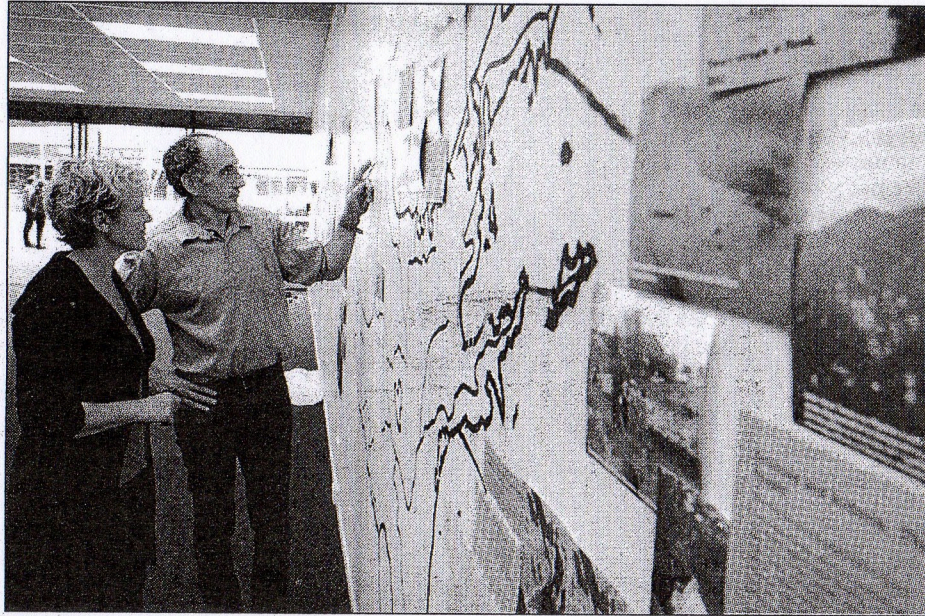
Some popular topics on display include the pest fish problem in our rivers and lakes, mining in the Coromandel, and maps which show space, land and ocean around this country and Antarctica that is owned by New Zealand.

"People realise that we are talking about the country's mining potential but what about the ocean potential ... New Zealand owns the fourth largest area of ocean in the world," said organiser Peter Fend.

However, the way the Situation Room differs is that viewers do not have to be passive observers and can add to information displayed.

"We invite people to take a lead, to speak up, to run a session on an issue or action, to put comments and visuals on the walls or just to look around," said Mr Fend.

The idea behind the look of the Situation Room is, the visual way in which the topics are displayed makes them



ROOM WITH A VIEW: Heidi Mardon and organiser Peter Fend view some of the information posted in the Situation Room.

Photo: KATRINA BIELESKI

accessible and connects people with the information.

"Quite a few people come in and track through the maps to find where they live and when they recognise a location and it sparks off your connection with the material," said Enviroschools director and Situation Room co-organiser Heidi Mardon.

The concept was born out of a project called "News Room" in the US, where a lot of different news feeds and satellite images were broadcast in one space. This eventually evolved into the Situation Room where people could add their own

information. The most recent Situation Room was in Bristol, UK. Peter Fend was involved with these early "Room" projects and has now brought the concept to Hamilton, but our version is a bit different, as it is not inside an art gallery or museum as the other projects have been.

"Situation Room in Hamilton, unlike any other Room project, is entirely outside the art world and art context. This has made the experience truly new," said Mr Fend.

■ The Situation Room, 391 Victoria St, Hamilton, open 12pm- late, until May 1.