

Boffa Miskell

issue
number: 21

news:



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Former inner city service lanes are being revitalised with guidance on prioritising and design.

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The Northern Gateway toll road sets new standards in environmental performance in roading design and construction.

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Boffa Miskell^{NEWS}
winter²⁰⁰⁹



Editorial: Looking ahead

Looking ahead is a topical theme in this time of world change. In our experience (yes, we've seen a few such changes in our time as a practice) this is a good chance to recalibrate for the future and to look ahead. We see a world that *will* continue to go around, but want to see the longer-term view being taken and greater responsibility placed on finding solutions to what are, by now, well known problems.

Although the inevitable economic obsession seems to be driving populist discussion about the future, we at Boffa Miskell are still busy 'planning' in the ways we always have; to help our clients achieve their goals in ways that contribute to a wider balance of social, economic and environmental benefit. However, we should all now pay special attention to value – not just in terms of cost, but also in widening the circle of benefit, applying more reality checking, getting the structure right and accepting longer terms for optional extras.

The growth of our urban planning and urban design work, some of which is featured in this issue, exemplifies this approach. I have no doubt it reflects that people in the community, at many levels

of government and amongst the more discerning deliverers of built environments, are recognising how important the urban environment is to all of our quality of life. Today, this means paying attention to the constituent elements; places to live, parks for play, places to work, and how they relate to one another and the wider context, including the economy.

My hope is that the benefits of urban design, and the value it adds, are not lost in the current scramble to 'cut costs' – it's up to us all to use every opportunity we can to show that value.

Here's to the future.

Marc Bailly, Director

Flax country

Foxton, once the bustling hub of New Zealand's flax fibre industry, is to retrace its unique heritage through open space development of its former river port.

Few would guess that flax mills, wharves, rail yards and warehouses once crowded the town's Manawatu River edge – now the quiet Riverloop Reserve.

In 2008 Boffa Miskell prepared a landscape concept plan for the Horowhenua District Council, designed to enhance the reserve's open space and heritage potential. The plan includes recreational facilities in a central activities zone, new boardwalks, extensive restoration planting, historic interpretation and riverside walking connections.

Street and canal enhancement will strengthen connections to the Main Street and form part of the town centre redevelopment with which Boffa Miskell is also assisting the council.

CONTACT: Steve Dunn steve.dunn@boffamiskell.co.nz

▼ The Foxton river front in the 1910s: now the soon-to-be enhanced Riverloop Reserve.

Boffa Miskell NEWS

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This newsletter is published twice a year by Boffa Miskell Ltd.

DESIGNED AND PRODUCED BY: DNA

EDITED BY: Shona McCahon

COVER: Vintage bike wall feature in SOL Square, one of the Christchurch lanes (see story page 3); photographer Nik Kneale of Boffa Miskell.

ILLUSTRATIONS: P3, bottom, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, Ref No F-67744-1/2.

PRINTED IN WELLINGTON BY: Service Printers

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Back issues of *Boffa Miskell NEWS* can be found at www.boffamiskell.co.nz



Take a walk down Christchurch lanes

Venture off the main streets of central Christchurch and you might discover a 'back door' network of service lanes and car parks. It's the city's underside, starkly functional yet unexpectedly appealing.

In 2006, the Christchurch City Council recognised that 'The Lanes', as they are known, had potential to enrich and revitalise the central city. They could provide extra walking connections combined with inviting public spaces where mixed-use activities could spill out from adjacent buildings. The council undertook, through its strategic Central City Lanes Plan, to work with property owners on redeveloping the 26 lanes.

Boffa Miskell has subsequently helped guide the plan's implementation by making an inventory of all the lanes, reviewing the planning and traffic contexts, preparing a design guide and developing a tool for setting priorities.

Boffa Miskell urban designer Tim Church says the project was really about putting the strategic plan's principles into action and that meant a multi-disciplinary approach to get a complete picture. The project team included Boffa Miskell urban designers, planners and landscape architects, together with Wilkie + Bruce architects, Melbourne-based urban designer Stuart Niven, Via Strada traffic planners and council staff.



▲ People like the contrast between ornate street frontages and the industrial character of the lanes.



▲ Mixed uses have spilled out into His Lordships Lane, creating a lively destination.

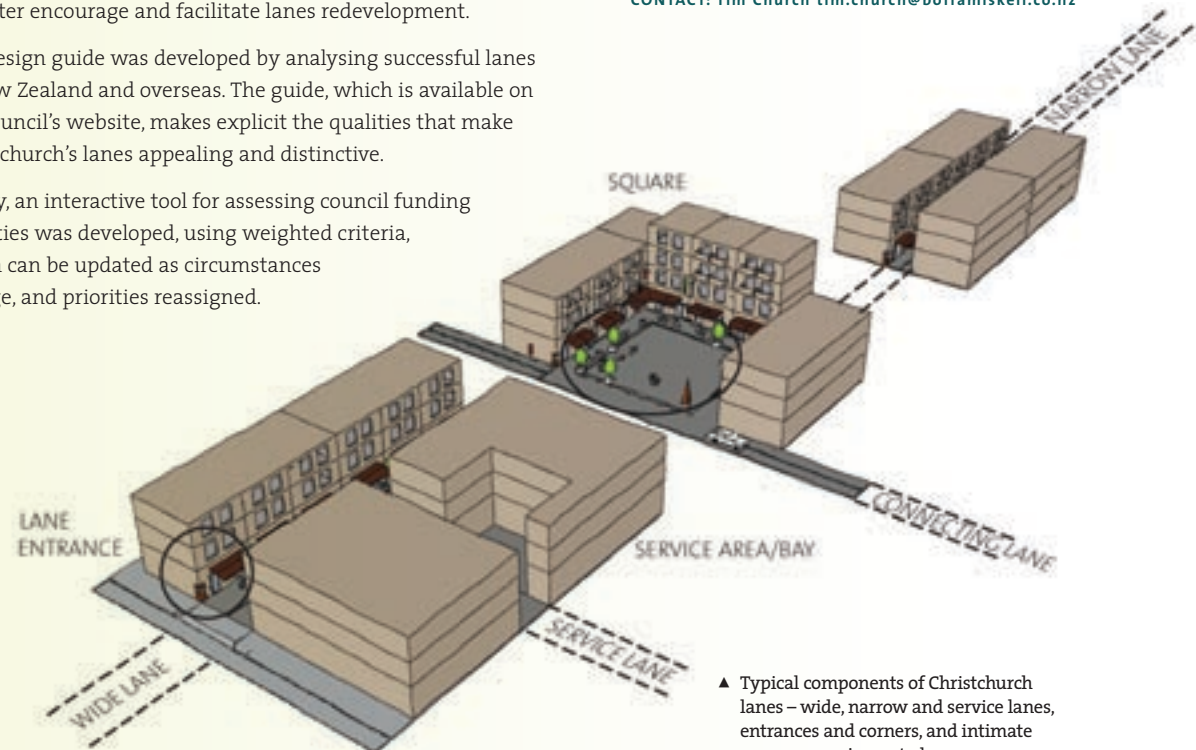
At the detailed level, lane-by-lane site information about existing urban form, scale, function and character was recorded in the inventory. At the broader level, the policy and bylaw framework was comprehensively reviewed, including incentives, traffic planning and design factors, and a range of changes recommended to better encourage and facilitate lanes redevelopment.

The design guide was developed by analysing successful lanes in New Zealand and overseas. The guide, which is available on the council's website, makes explicit the qualities that make Christchurch's lanes appealing and distinctive.

Finally, an interactive tool for assessing council funding priorities was developed, using weighted criteria, which can be updated as circumstances change, and priorities reassigned.

On completion in mid-2008, Boffa Miskell compiled a dossier which brought together all recent and previous lanes work. An interactive CD of essential reference material was also produced for staff and stakeholders to guide and champion council/developer partnerships.

CONTACT: Tim Church tim.church@boffamiskell.co.nz



▲ Typical components of Christchurch lanes – wide, narrow and service lanes, entrances and corners, and intimate squares opening onto lanes.

Understanding urban character

A Boffa Miskell urban character assessment has provided key research towards developing Wellington's new district plan provisions – provisions that will address the 'where' and 'how' of residential intensification within the existing city footprint.

According to Wellington City Council Senior Strategic Advisor Urban Development, Paul Kos, the assessment was by far the most read of all the research that the council undertook for its review.

Boffa Miskell urban planner Marc Baily says it was important that the assessment methodology was robust and objective because it would be closely scrutinised through the statutory district plan change process. Moreover, the outcomes had to be easily communicated to a wide audience because urban character is such a sensitive topic these days, as evidenced in the Wellington community.

Eleven broad character areas across the city were identified at the beginning of the assessment process and these areas were systematically assessed in terms of pre-defined criteria for both natural and built character elements. Preliminary analysis, based upon a literature review, historical research and GIS mapping, was followed by extensive field checking.

"Urban character assessment is really about understanding the combination of elements that make up the essence of the place," Marc says. "At the quite high strategic level we were working at, we could see the way that Wellington had developed and how the built and natural elements have interwoven into distinctive patterns or urban form."

Sensitivity to change

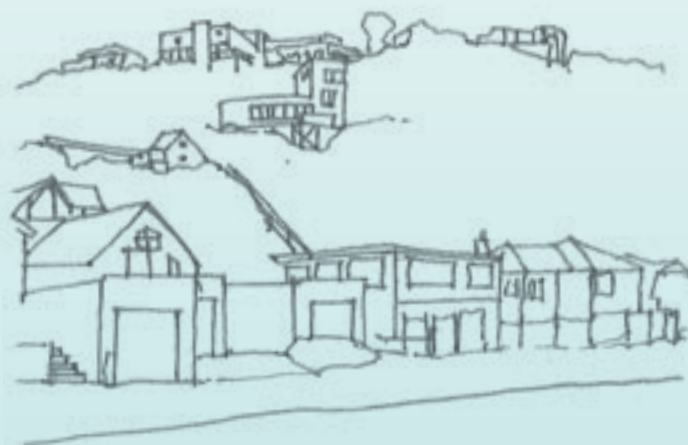
Given the council's objective to provide for some residential intensification, the assessment included an analysis of the elements and places in the city that would be 'sensitive to change'. Boffa Miskell considered the nature of changes that might typically occur with intensified development, analysed its potential effect on existing natural and built character elements, and mapped areas that would be sensitive to change.

"Some of the older hillside suburbs are a good example of areas that are sensitive to change," Marc says. "Typically, they have a pattern of narrow, steep streets, smaller wooden houses and green character associated with un-built open space. This is at odds with the larger-scale new development of the type common today, with flat sites, larger houses and wider streets.

"Some other suburbs such as Johnsonville, on the other hand, have potential to absorb change due to their relatively even topography and more diverse urban character and housing stock."

The character assessment is being used by the council for a range of urban design, heritage, policy, parks and infrastructure work in addition to the residential review, which is currently out for public consultation.

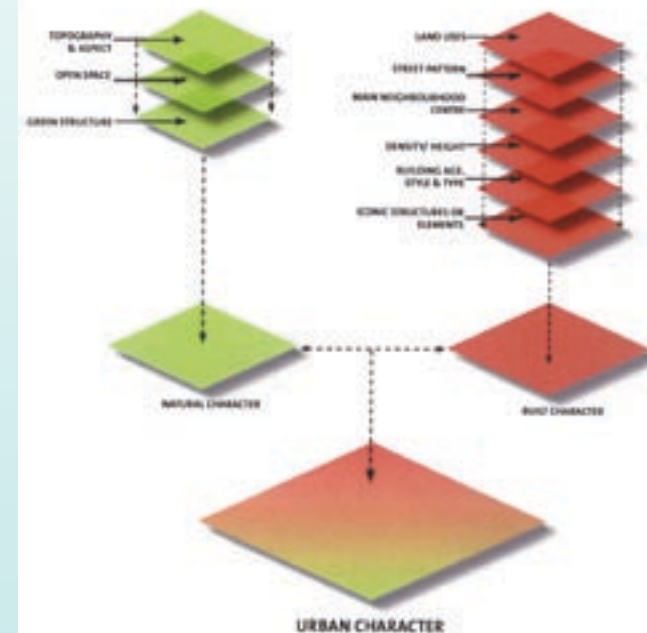
CONTACT: Marc Baily marc.baily@boffamiskell.co.nz



▲ The steep open space of Wellington's coastal escarpment is sensitive to change in numerous ways, including the 'creep' of buildings down from the ridgetops.



▲ Areas sensitive to change were mapped for each of the city's eleven urban character areas, such as the inner western suburbs pictured.



▲ The process of defining urban character through assessing natural character criteria (green) and built character criteria (orange).

Northern Gateway

A new benchmark

Boffa Miskell is proud to have been responsible for the ecological advice, landscape design and environmental management of the recently opened Northern Gateway toll road north of Auckland.

The 7.5km, \$360 million route is acknowledged as having set new benchmarks in environmental performance for the construction industry.

Boffa Miskell was initially involved with the ecological aspects of the initial environmental assessment, route selection and preliminary design leading up to the granting of the main resource consent in 2001. We then provided environmental management and landscape design services to the project



▲ Native forest remains intact below the Otanerua eco-viaduct. Instead of horizontal benching, cut batters merge into the existing landform (top right).

as one of the project partners in the Northern Gateway Alliance, also comprising Transit NZ (now the New Zealand Transport Agency), Fulton Hogan, Leighton Contractors, URS New Zealand and Tonkin Taylor, which was formed in 2004 to design and construct the road.

“Environmentally, it was a tricky route as it traversed sensitive natural habitats and important landscapes that form the northern gateway of the greater Auckland urban area,” says Boffa Miskell landscape architect Chris Bentley. “However, those very challenges, combined with the collaborative environment of working within an alliance, resulted in creative thinking and a desire, throughout the entire project, to keep refining the design and pushing for better ways of doing things.”

CONTACT: Chris Bentley chris.bentley@boffamiskell.co.nz

For more about Boffa Miskell's involvement in the project and the awards the project has received, see 'Featured Projects' on www.boffamiskell.co.nz



▲ Traversing sensitive areas: the Waiwera estuary (centre) and the Johnstone's Hill twin tunnels (left) where the portals were extended to allow revegetation instead of massive retaining walls.

The environmental achievements

Best-fit route alignment. Wherever possible, the route was aligned to avoid ecologically sensitive areas, such as nesting habitats of the semi-endangered fern bird.

Taking it overhead. Where the route had to cross sensitive areas, eco-viaducts were designed to curve elegantly above the forest canopy with minimal disturbance to the forest floor.

Minimising the footprint. Substantial bush areas were saved from clearance by steepening the angle of battered slopes, thereby also reducing earthworks and revegetation costs.

Working with landform. Massive and visually obtrusive retaining walls at the entrance to twin tunnels were replaced by revegetated slopes by extending the tunnel entrances. Elsewhere, the benched roadside cuttings, that typically mar roadsides, were replaced by weathered sandstone faces similar to the area's coastal cliffs, giving way to battered slopes that integrate smoothly with the existing landforms.

Net Environmental Benefit System. Boffa Miskell developed a practical system for monitoring and measuring environmental performance in relation to habitats, landscape and resource use, with bonus scoring that encouraged all project partners to continually strive for improvement.

On-the-ground experience. Boffa Miskell ecologists and landscape architects worked daily with the construction crews to find immediate, practical ways to implement good environmental practice in the field.

Down-under connections. Where bridges were unfeasible, culverts were specifically designed to recreate 'in-stream habitat'. The bottom surface was constructed with purpose-designed plastic baffles and rock weirs to create a series of pools and eddies which enable fish passage and provide in-stream habitat.

Culvert designed to recreate ►
in-stream habitat.



Urban design case law

A review of case law relevant to urban design summarises some 70 Environment Court decisions and identifies key pointers to urban design practice.

The Ministry for the Environment project was undertaken by Boffa Miskell and lawyers Morrison and Kent to assist people involved in resource consent processes and councils preparing second generation district plans.

“Urban design is now a more widely recognised approach to planning for and making decisions around urban change than when the first generation plans were done,” Boffa Miskell urban planner Marc Baily says. “It needs statutory attention, and learning from the case law provides some useful places to start.”

Released in November 2008, the review describes major trends under eight urban design topics: amenity, character, heritage, density, movement, commerce, urban growth and open space, and can be downloaded from the Ministry’s website. A recent series of introductory seminars held in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch have been well received.

CONTACT: Marc Baily marc.baily@boffamiskell.co.nz

Dong Jiao villas

In 2008, Boffa Miskell completed the master planning and detailed landscape design of a residential development in Shanghai.

Chris Bentley, Boffa Miskell landscape architect, says employing JJ Chen, a Chinese landscape architect, helped to overcome language and cultural differences, enabling the tight timeframes to be met.

The 29-home scheme is the second stage of the Dong Jiao Villas being developed by the Dongchang Group Real Estate Development



A new era in prison design

New Zealand’s newest prisons are open, green, campus-style environments, designed to be calming and healing – a far cry from the walled-in concrete yards of traditional penitentiaries.

Boffa Miskell undertook the landscape design of four regional prisons that the Department of Corrections has opened in Northland, Auckland, Waikato and Otago since 2005. In each instance, Boffa Miskell landscape architects worked within teams of prison design specialists, architects and Corrections staff whose aim was to create humane prison environments that would foster prisoner rehabilitation while meeting security requirements.

Detailed landscape maintenance manuals for each site were also prepared to specify the ongoing maintenance that would be required to ensure the landscape design and security objectives will be met as the landscape develops.

CONTACT: Steve Dunn steve.dunn@boffamiskell.co.nz



◀ Springhill correction facility.

New regional park

“Learn, play, create and care” – these are amongst the key objectives inherent in the master plan for a new 1650-hectare regional park between Rotorua and Tauranga, designed by Boffa Miskell.

The objectives were brainstormed with potential park user groups in a collaborative design process for the TECT All Terrain Park, which is jointly owned by the Western Bay of Plenty and Tauranga District Councils, and sponsored by the Tauranga Energy Consumer Trust (TECT). It will cater for a range of active and passive recreational activities including mountain biking, rallying, motocross, firearm sports, horse riding, tramping and orienteering.

The master plan provides for staged development over the next two decades, starting this year with the central hub site, which will be the main arrival point and focus of visitor facilities.

“Initially, park development will be aimed at first-time and transient visitors, designed to entice them in, try new things and come back” says Boffa Miskell landscape architect, Morné Hugo. “Then user group facilities will be progressively developed.”

Interestingly, Boffa Miskell’s cultural background research revealed that former Maori walking paths passed by the hub, and this significance will be recognised in site development.

The park’s official opening is scheduled for late 2009.

CONTACT: Morné Hugo morne.hugo@boffamiskell.co.nz



▲ The central hub master plan.

A critical friend



For Boffa Miskell urban designer, **John Mackay**, being a ‘critical friend’ to the Auckland Regional Council was an invitation to ask provocative questions.

John was one of four ‘critical friends’ with expertise in urban design, economics, planning and local government who helped the ARC facilitate a series of workshops in 2008 for officers of the region’s seven district councils about the ARC’s Futures Planning Project. The project is aimed at modelling and reaching agreement on future urban form and transport infrastructure to accommodate a predicted million more people in Auckland by 2050. It is driving the reviews of the Regional Land Transport Strategy and Regional Growth Strategy.

“By asking provocative questions we were able to tease out points that other people round the table were keen to hear.”

The friends’ role was to ask challenging but informed and constructive questions, to independently critique options as they were developed and modelled, and to contribute alternative ideas. They also helped communicate the emerging options to executive committees.

“By asking provocative questions we were able to tease out points that other people round the table were keen to hear,” John says. “It was also important that we were ‘trusted friends’ - taking the time to fully understand the context of the work presented and commit to the goals.

“Ultimately, the friend is an advocate for the success of that work. This side of the role, from independent outsiders, was important as it helps to defuse the mutual suspicion and scepticism that sometimes bogs down inter-council policy development.”

CONTACT: John Mackay john.mackay@boffamiskell.co.nz

Urban design panellists

Boffa Miskell urban designer **Tim Church** and landscape architect **William Field** have been appointed to the Christchurch City Council’s urban design panel.

The twelve-person panel represents expertise in urban design, landscape architecture, architecture, planning and property management. The panellists provide independent expert advice and recommendations to the council and private developers on urban design aspects of proposed new developments as well as local and national urban design policy.

Tim and William say that, as well as offering their own expertise, they are gaining from the panel a wider understanding of different perspectives which, in turn, helps them to improve their own client projects.

Boffa Miskell is very supportive of this collaborative approach to urban design and the council’s initiative to reinforce best practice urban design in the city.



Tim Church



William Field

Sustainability advisor

Sustainability has always been implicit in Boffa Miskell’s consulting services. For over 36 years we have recognised the value of holistic, integrated and long-term thinking, understood the interconnections between natural environments, people and built infrastructure, and respected the limits of natural resources and ecological systems.



We are pleased to announce the next step in our commitment to a sustainable future; the appointment of a dedicated Sustainability Advisor. **Pene Burns** has joined us with a background in environmental impact assessment, management systems and resource efficiency consulting.

Pene works with our urban designers, landscape architects, planners and ecologists to help offer our clients innovative solutions that meet their sustainability goals and add value to their projects. Pene also provides strategic advice to help clients consider sustainability concepts and devise practical methods to embed those concepts into their projects or business operations.

Boffa Miskell is also strongly committed to reviewing and improving our own operational performance. Pene and our sustainability team will publish our first Sustainability Report this year, following environmental reports in 2005, 2006 and 2007. The report will summarise our performance in relation to social, environmental and economic indicators for 2008 and set specific targets for the future.

CONTACT: Pene Burns pene.burns@boffamiskell.co.nz

Distinguished service planning award



Boffa Miskell planner and director, **Robert Schofield**, received a Distinguished Service Award from the New Zealand Planning Institute on World Planning Day on 8 November.

The award was in recognition of Robert’s significant contribution to the Institute and the field of planning, and the

citation particularly noted his project management and consultative skills.

“It is these skills which are a particular strength and which have enabled him to become so well known and effective in the management of complex environmental assessments and resource consents, including those involving extensive public consultation. Robert strives for positive ‘win-win’ outcomes for all participants.”

To the millimetre

Precision to the nearest millimetre is required to translate a deceptively simple honeycomb paving pattern onto the ground at St Patrick's Square in Auckland.

"It looks very simple when finished," Boffa Miskell landscape architect Richard Tyler says, "but every piece is cut and coded for unique placement."

The paving is one part of the square's upgrade, which Boffa Miskell designed for the Auckland City Council in 2007 (see Boffa Miskell NEWS 18). Boffa Miskell subsequently prepared the contract documentation and is now supervising the implementation.

"This is one of Auckland CBD's most important public spaces and we're committed, together with contractors JFC Limited, to achieving a high quality, durable result for the council," Richard says.

Quality is greatly aided by the contractors' highly accurate 'Total Station' surveying equipment. Used in combination with GPS (Global Positioning System) and the Boffa Miskell digital drawings uploaded to an onsite computer, the centre of every paving joint is pinpointed on the ground.

"It's the fine quality of work and professionalism, generally, that we've particularly noticed in the Boffa Miskell team," says David Jones, Group Manager, CBD Projects at Auckland City Council. "It's a pleasure to work with them."

The square's upgrade is due for completion by November 2009.

CONTACT: Richard Tyler richard.tyler@boffamiskell.co.nz



▲ The upgrade of St Patrick's Square includes the honeycomb paving around the cathedral as well as new terracing with water features and planting.

▼ Laying out basalt triangles within the limestone borders:- with 2-3 mm joints, there is little margin for error.



Sustainable setting for innovation

Sustainable design is inherent in the building and landscape design of the recently opened NZi³ research and teaching facility at the University of Canterbury.

The NZi³ centre is dedicated to fostering innovation and partnership between university departments and business interests in information and communication technology. The Warren and Mahoney-designed facility is the first education building in New Zealand to receive a five-star 'New Zealand excellence' rating from the Green Building Council, of which Boffa Miskell is a member.

The landscape design by Boffa Miskell contributed to this rating through the use of locally indigenous plant species, local or recycled construction materials, and permeable surfaces and rainwater gardens to reduce and collect runoff – all specified to minimise the site's ecological footprint now and into the future.

The site development has been part of the ongoing campus master planning service undertaken by Boffa Miskell for the university since 1998.

CONTACT: William Field william.field@boffamiskell.co.nz

Boffa Miskell



WEBSITE: www.boffamiskell.co.nz
EMAIL: info@boffamiskell.co.nz

AUCKLAND
Level 3, IBM Centre,
82 Wyndham Street,
AUCKLAND 1010
PO Box 91 250, AUCKLAND 1142
PH: 09-358-2526
FAX: 09-359-5300

TAURANGA
Level 2, 116 on Cameron,
cnr Cameron Road and Wharf Street,
TAURANGA 3110
PO Box 13 373, TAURANGA 3141
PH: 07-571-5511
FAX: 07-571-3333

WELLINGTON
Level 9, 190 Willis Street,
WELLINGTON 6011
PO Box 11 340, WELLINGTON 6142
PH: 04-385-9315
FAX: 04-384-3089

CHRISTCHURCH
Level 6, Brannigans Building,
86 Gloucester Street,
CHRISTCHURCH 8011
PO Box 110, CHRISTCHURCH 8140
PH: 03-366-8891
FAX: 03-365-7539