Cyclone disrupts ARC chief’s rat-killing mission

by Alannah May Erikson

Auckland Regional Council chairman Mike Lee could have some explaining to do next time he visits the city library, after losing three of its books on a deserted Pacific island.

Mr Lee had been travelling on a low-flying French Polynesian islet of Onetahi as Cyclone Oil struck. 

Cyclone Oil struck Tetarere on Wednesday night and by yesterday morning, water was lapping at the shipping container in which Mr Lee and his colleagues, from the University of Auckland, were staying.

Last night—Mr Lee and his companions were in a motel at the international airport in Papeete, awaiting a flight back to NZ.

He said they had been due to get a boat back to Tahiti from Onetahi today but the cyclone had stopped sea transport.

A keen conservationist who holds a masters degree in biological sciences, Mr Lee took time off from his regular duties with the ARC to join the conservation efforts of Dr Russell, a scientist at the University of California campus in San Francisco.

Mr Lee said the group believed it had managed to trap all the rats, which would hopefully allow the birds to breed in safety.