

This is the final issue of this newsletter, produced by the Ministry for the Environment.

Although *talk sustainability* is ending, readers can turn to many other sources of sustainability news and innovations in New Zealand.

The Ministry's quarterly *Environz* magazine will continue to cover developments in environmental policy, including sustainability. Ministry staff will continue to assist the public with sustainability queries, and through the sustainability.govt.nz website.

The website is a central repository or 'portal' for household sustainability advice. It includes links to specialist information on energy, building, waste, water and transport.

The community education courses run throughout New Zealand by the Sustainable Living Programme provide

practical advice on everyday changes people can make to reduce their environmental impact at home. Check sustainableliving.org.nz for details.

The 'Choices' programme, run by the Sustainability Trust, helps community groups seeking environmental improvement. More information is at www.sustaintrust.org.nz

The Ministry still has copies of the excellent DVD *Balancing Acts* to give away – the 25 minute film includes interviews with people sharing ideas on priorities for sustainable living. For a copy, email info@sustainability.govt.nz with your name, address and phone number.

Kind Regards



Lindsay Gow

DEPUTY SECRETARY
MINISTRY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

Other information sources

General www.mfe.govt.nz

Building and construction
www.smarterhomes.org.nz
www.beaconpathway.co.nz

Waste, compost, recycling
www.zerowaste.co.nz
www.wastebusters.net.nz
www.createyourowneden.org.nz
www.ecomatters.org.nz
www.packagingaccord.org.nz

Energy
www.energywise.org.nz
www.solarsmarter.org.nz

Transport/fuel efficiency
www.rightcar.govt.nz
www.fuelsaver.govt.nz

Climate change
www.climatechange.govt.nz

Council websites www.lgnz.co.nz

Minimising waste – having your say

The Ministry for the Environment has just completed consultation on how best to implement aspects of New Zealand's new waste minimisation policy.

Officials sought feedback on five issues:

- revised targets for the New Zealand Waste Strategy
- identifying priority products for product stewardship
- identifying funding criteria for the Waste Minimisation Fund
- monitoring the composition of landfill waste
- improving the operation of the waste levy.

Detail on each of these issues is explained in the discussion document *Waste Minimisation in New Zealand* available at www.mfe.govt.nz. Ministry officials hosted 10 public consultation workshops around the country to help people prepare submissions.

Waste Minimisation Implementation Manager Paul Kennel says the workshops were well-attended with representation from local government, groups, organisations and businesses interested in waste minimisation.

Submissions closed at 5 pm on 15 May. The Ministry will summarise submissions on the discussion paper and use them to help develop policy.



↘ Counter-cyclical recyclers

A local trust in the Far North – the Community Business and Employment Centre (CBEC) – has been collecting glass, paper and plastics from residents right across the district, from Kaitaia up to tiny, isolated Te Hapua, near Cape Reinga for the past 20 years.

The service boasts high collection rates, diverting 50 per cent of waste previously dumped at the area's single landfill. They dispose of everything they collect – with no stockpiling – despite being a relatively small player in the recycling industry, and a long way from recycled product markets.

Most impressively, the trust has continued to make a profit from recycling, despite the recent downturn in world prices. "It has affected our profit margin," General Manager Cliff Colquhoun admits, "but not to the point where it's below cost – and I haven't had to reduce our service at all."

So how do they do it? First, they have stuck to an open-crate kerbside collection system – Cliff maintains that this leads to cleaner, higher quality product that's easier to sell to commodity recyclers.

"Kerbside collection of co-mingled product in wheelie bins is quicker and cheaper at the first stage," he says. "But when you add the extra sorting costs and the reduced revenue from sale of the product, the overall cost is higher."

Community cooperation is a critical factor – Cliff and his team put great store in teaching people why recycling matters, how to do it properly, and the resource value of the materials.

"We've had education programmes in all our schools for the past 12 years. Every class is offered four one-hour lessons on waste minimisation every year," he says. "Many of the kids we first taught are now adults who have learned good recycling values."



> The Kaitaia Recycling Centre

"We also teach people at the kerbside – if someone has put something in the recycling bin that is not appropriate, we leave it behind. That way people are more in tune with materials that can be accepted, and become inclined to keep it clean."

A CBEC joint venture with Wanaka Wastebusters is also running a profitable kerbside recycling contract in the Queenstown Lakes District. In addition, the trust runs a community swimming pool, a labour hire service, a home insulation company and a nursery in the Far North, among other things. "We employ about 70 permanent staff in services that others don't want to do," Cliff says.

↘ New bus technology clarified

Environment Waikato has clarified that the new Pavlovich bus used on one of its services drastically cuts emission of fine particles (PM) and oxides of nitrogen (NO_x), rather than carbon dioxide (CO₂).

The bus, profiled in the March issue of *talk sustainability*, is used on the new City Express service between Hamilton city and Te Rapa. It uses advanced engine combustion design and electronic fuel injection to reduce the PM emissions, and selective catalyst reduction (SCR) technology to reduce the NO_x emissions.

The SCR system is urea-based and converts the harmful NO_x gas into harmless nitrogen and water.

Based on advice it had received, Environment Waikato had previously reported that the urea-based system cut CO₂

emissions to a very low level. But bus maker Volvo has clarified to Environment Waikato that it is PM and NO_x emissions that are reduced from the levels produced by other buses used in Hamilton.

"We appreciate our operator is using technology that reduces harmful emissions and that they are also working to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions generally," said the council's land transport operations manager Bevan Dale.

↘ Fostering our young environmental leaders

This year's Youth Environment Forum saw 49 enthusiastic 15 to 18 year olds from around New Zealand descend upon Wellington to take part in practical projects, voice opinions on environmental issues and learn first hand about environmental management.

During the week of April 19th to the 23rd, these young environmental guardians threw themselves into projects involving dune planting on Petone's erosion-prone beach, water testing in a local stream to check for potential sources of water pollution, and waste auditing at a busy backpackers. They then presented what they had learned before invited guests at Parliament.

This is the sixth time the Ministry-hosted Youth Environment Forum has taken place. During this time, outstanding young people – full of energy and enthusiasm for the environment, and already making important contributions to protecting it – have gained a greater awareness about environmental issues and have been empowered to take future action

within their communities to improve and protect their own environment.

A delegate from last year's forum, Brittany Packer, says the importance of the projects and the process of sharing and learning together cannot be overlooked. "Not only did we learn skills, techniques and ideas from more experienced people, but we also learned from people our own age, just by sharing ideas and stories."

Many other countries have environmental youth councils which have propelled young environmentalists to the world stage, and this national forum for young New Zealanders with an interest in the environment is a great opportunity for our youth to have a say in the future of our environment.



> Hands on experience: delegates take part in a waste audit at this year's Youth Environment Forum

↘ Greening council flats

Some Wellington City Council tenants will soon be managing their waste sustainably – and enjoying free produce from a communal garden – thanks to the efforts of City Housing's Community Action Team and waste consultant Sarah Pritchett.

Until now, tenants at the multi-story Te Ara Hou flats in Newtown have got rid of all their rubbish, including compostables, down a single chute, and few tenants have used the available recycling bins – although this is about to change.

As part of the Council's overall refurbishment of Te Ara Hou flats, the rubbish chutes will go, there will be more attractive apartment entrances, and much thought has gone into a sustainable waste management system that suits tenants' needs.

Sarah has been developing a new waste management strategy that includes persuading residents to consider putting Bokashi bins in their kitchens to collect their food scraps and turn them into compost and liquid fertiliser.

It is intended the bins would be collected fortnightly by tenants appointed as waste wardens – the contents would then go into a communal garden, maintained by tenants who would collectively enjoy the veges. They would also be encouraged to leave recyclables in designated areas for regular collection.

"All the tenants I've spoken to so far are enthusiastic about the Bokashi system," she says. "A few tenants are sceptical about the communal garden, but I think they will come around once they see it working."

The key to making it work is having good waste wardens to educate tenants, Sarah says. "They will be able to tell the council what's working and what's not – for example, they'll need to make sure that we get usable compost for the garden."

She is now preparing a strategy, incorporating tenants' views, to give to the Wellington City Council later this month. She is confident of coming up with a plan that is popular with residents and keeps costs reasonable.

Sarah was originally influenced by the work of a community organisation at council flats in east London – which in one case achieved 86 per cent uptake of Bokashi buckets by tenants. Residents at Talbot Park Housing New Zealand flats in Auckland are also using the Bokashi system and operating a communal garden.

➤ Sustaina-briefs

Green machine

Pat Boyle's 'green machine' is powering around the streets of Marton – and costing just \$10 a year to run. Mr Boyle's electrically-powered tri-shaw travels 40-100km on just a single charge-up. He developed the machine from an electric tri-shaw he bought off Trade Me, improving the original's performance. He has travelled 600 km around town over three months at a cost of just \$2.50 in electricity – at that rate, he estimates a year's round-towning will cost just \$10. For more information, visit www.greenmachines.co.nz.



Celebrating Environmental Champions

The Green Ribbon Awards are presented by the Minister for the Environment to recognise the outstanding contributions of individuals, organisations and businesses to sustaining, protecting and enhancing New Zealand's environment. Thursday 4 June marks the 19th year of the Green Ribbon Awards – this year's ceremony will be held in Wellington at the Grand Hall, Parliament Buildings.

Sustainable living courses

Home food growing, preserving, compost-making, car fuel saving, water efficiency, insulation and eco-building design were all among the hot topics covered in courses run by the Sustainable Living Trust around New Zealand in the first term of 2009. The trust will start a new round of courses in May at high schools, environment centres and other locations. National Coordinator Rhys Taylor says the courses offer money-saving shopping ideas, tips for a healthy home, ways to cut winter power bills, and guidance on growing food in the back yard. For more information, visit www.sustainableliving.org.nz

Invercargill courses popular

Courses on sustainable living run by the Invercargill City Council (ICC) are going down well with Southerners. ICC Waste Management Officer Donna Peterson says the courses have been so popular they have had to organise extra sessions. Topics covered this year have included 'Scraps to Soil' (composting and worm farming), 'Paddock to Plot' (edible gardening), 'Preserving for the Future' (jams and food freezing), and 'Making Mosaics out of Rubbish.' Donna says the gardening courses have been especially popular.

Going like hot cakes

The Environment Ministry's '25 Easy Steps Towards Sustainability' booklet has been so popular that only a few print copies are left. To get yours, email publications@mfe.govt.nz with the publication number 873 – it will not be reprinted after stocks are used up. A PDF version will continue to be available online at www.sustainability.govt.nz.

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