

2007 was the year that sustainability grabbed everyone's attention – here and abroad – from individuals and community groups, to corporate headquarters.

Here in New Zealand, around 170 sustainability initiatives by government agencies are now under way, with major centre-pieces including the Emissions Trading Scheme and the New Zealand Energy Strategy.

There are also many initiatives under way at the local level including the 'Smart Home', covered in this issue, developed by Nelson City and Tasman District Councils to demonstrate power and water efficiency.

Read on for more about these initiatives.

Kind regards



Lindsay Gow

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WASTED! makes sustainability fun

Thanks to a ground-breaking television series, the Crump family (pictured) is saving \$1325 a year on their power bills – and throwing out much less rubbish.



Their story is typical of WASTED!'s successes. Producer Carthew Neal, of television production company Fumes, said the programme set out to deliver the environmental message by being "entertaining rather than worthy".

With help from the WASTED! team, the Crumps have made big savings through installing insulation, using the washing machine and dryer less, and installing energy-efficient light bulbs.

The Crump's energy and waste savings are estimated to have reduced their 'environmental footprint' from 39 to 24 times the size of their section.



> Yecchhh: WASTED! participants the Crump family front up to their food waste from the previous month.

"People want to know what they can do, not just the disaster stories," Carthew said. "We made the show entertaining and informative by taking families on a journey, showing them simple steps they could take to save the environment and save money."

Carthew said it was important to reach people who might not have thought about reducing their impact on the planet – "we wanted to inspire them, even just to start by doing one or two things".

The popular, critically acclaimed 10-part series took out the supreme award at this year's EECA Energywise Awards, which celebrate innovation and achievement in the energy efficiency sector.

WASTED! had earlier won an international award at the prestigious Cannes MIPCOM TV festival for Best Observational Format. It has also picked up the Sustainable Business Network's Innovation Award, and the Environment Ministry's Green Ribbon Award.

Developed in New Zealand, the series is now screened in several countries including Canada, Finland, the United States and Israel. Producers in the United States, Spain and Denmark have bought the concept to create their own local versions.

Collectively the first series attracted three million viewers, putting it in TV3's top five programmes of the week on several occasions. TV3 has commissioned a second series of WASTED!, now in production and due for screening next year.

Carthew said the second series would have a similar format, but would look at new subjects with a focus on transport, carbon and the toxicity levels of New Zealand homes.

> www.energywise.org.nz

Plastic-free shopping in the South

Many consumers in two South Island regions are saying 'no' to plastic shopping bags, thanks to efforts by local campaigners.

In Wanaka, the 'Bag the Habit' campaign has persuaded nearly half of the residents to kick the plastic bag habit. And Greymouth 'Bag Lady' Jo Dayaram is making cheap, attractive and re-usable shopping bags that will soon be available throughout the West Coast.

These are among the local efforts complementing the nationwide 'Make a Difference' campaign, which aims to reduce plastic shopping bag use by encouraging shoppers to use alternatives.

The 15-month-old Wanaka campaign aims to rid the town of plastic shopping bags. Coordinator Sophie Ward, of Sustainable Wanaka and Wanaka Wastebusters, said the organisers worked closely with supermarkets on training staff to offer non-plastic options.



> The 'Bag Lady's' bags: a selection of Jo Dayaram's wares

"If the customer buys less than four things, staff will ask if they need a bag," she said. "They ask, 'Have you got a bag with you today?' before offering one, and they provide cardboard boxes."

The campaign also targets the public directly, through posters, local media, and promotions at the Wanaka Festival and elsewhere. Sophie said that 45 per cent of locals now avoided using plastic bags, and 30 per cent of retail businesses were plastic bag-free.

One local supermarket has become the first in New Zealand to announce that it will remove plastic bags within a year, and it has introduced alternatives like paper bags and an exchange programme for pre-loved bags.

"I think it is reaching a point of critical mass," she said. "A lot of people in the community have managed to break the habit."

Out west, Jo Dayaram has been making reusable calico bags since 2003. Her operation is about to hit the big time, with Solid Energy agreeing to sponsor production of 6000 bags for distribution around the Coast.

"They will be sold for \$5 a bag in supermarkets and at The Warehouse," she said. "They will be decorated with artwork from our local schools. We hope to have them out in January or February."

Nationally, the 'Make a Difference' campaign logo appears in 646 supermarkets from Invercargill to Whangarei, reminding consumers that they can use something other than plastic for their shopping.



> Bagging the habit: Sophie Ward with a re-usable shopping bag.

The campaign, launched in June, is part of the Packaging Accord, a voluntary product stewardship scheme between central and local government, recyclers and the packaging industry. The Accord aims to substantially reduce packaging waste going to landfill, including by reducing plastic bag usage by 20 per cent.

> www.packagingaccord.org.nz

Centameter turns sense into dollars

Christchurch couple Mike and Monica's Centameter has saved serious money on their power bills – simply by turning off power switches when they don't need them.

They have saved around \$80 a month on their power bill, from about \$210 to about \$130, since they installed the Centameter two years ago.

"It made us more conscious of things that were switched on – now it's just the norm to switch things off when we're not using them," said Mike. "It's no sacrifice, quite straightforward really."

The Centameter had shown them how much power is used by appliances and lights when they were unnecessarily left on, he said.



↘ 'Smart Home' on show in Nelson

Thanks to cooperation between local councils and businesses, people living in the Nelson region will soon have the chance to see an eco-friendly 'Smart Home' in action.

The Smart Home is a travelling display unit designed as a small walk-in room. It includes power and water-efficiency features that save money and reduce environmental impact.

The Smart Home is a joint Nelson City/ Tasman District Council project. Nelson City Council Environmental Coordinator Karen Lee said the home had been strongly supported by local councils and businesses.

"We have been blown away by how the community has got behind this. We've had sponsorship from heaps of local businesses, including building material and product suppliers, and energy and transport companies," she said.

The Smart Home was unveiled at the Nelson A&P show in late November. It is now being taken to community locations in towns around the region.



The Smart Home includes cut-away sections to demonstrate insulation, as well as features like solar heating, a heat pump, insulation, double glazing, and a low-flow toilet and shower head. It is built

from environmentally-friendly untreated timber, and the kitchen units are formaldehyde-free and specially designed for recycling.

> www.nelsoncitycouncil.govt.nz

↘ Councils get into hot water

Hamilton City has become the latest council to waive building consent fees for solar water heating installation in an effort to encourage uptake.

Hamilton has joined Waitakere City and Westland District councils in removing the fees, which previously were \$215.

Hamilton City Council's Sustainable Environment Team Leader, Liz Hallsworth, said that following submissions to the city's annual plan review, the Council decided to waive the consent fee before the plan was finalised.

She said that publicity about the decision had encouraged people to look into solar heating. Attendances at the Council's sustainable living workshops showed there was keen interest.

"There is definitely much more awareness of it out there now – it's on people's radar and something that people are discussing," she said.

Government Energy Efficiency and Conservation spokesperson Jeanette Fitzsimons and Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority CEO Mike Underhill congratulated Hamilton City on its initiative while visiting on 16 November.

"Building consent fees for solar water heating vary considerably across councils and can be a price hurdle for homeowners considering installing a system. I strongly encourage other councils to demonstrate their commitment to sustainability by following the example set by Hamilton City Council, Waitakere City Council and Westland District Council," she said.

Hot water accounts for around \$800 of an average yearly household energy bill, and a well-designed and installed solar water heating system can save up to 75 per cent of this. Solar water heating systems, including the cylinder, typically cost between \$4000 and \$8000 installed.

> www.solarsmarter.org.nz

↳ Sustaina-briefs

Recycling in public places initiative

New recycling bins will soon start appearing in public places in four areas under a new initiative launched on 13 November. The government has allocated \$4.6 million over three years to establish around 600 public recycling bins around New Zealand. The scheme will first be trialled by Wellington and Christchurch City Councils, and by the Far North and Kaikoura District Councils.



> In they go: Wellington deputy Mayor Ian McKinnon, Prime Minister Helen Clark, and Environment Minister Trevor Mallard use a prototype of the recycling bin.

Sustainability 'portal' launch soon

A new website covering all aspects of household sustainability – known as the sustainability 'portal' – will be launched on 4 December. Hosted by the Ministry for the Environment, the portal will bring together information on six broad sustainability topics: building, energy, water, waste, transport and climate change. The site will include interactive forums, blog posts, videos, an action plan for site visitors, tips, information and competitions. Some initial information is already up on the site, at:

www.sustainability.govt.nz

New Zealand to host World Environment Day

New Zealand will host the next World Environment Day on 5 June 2008, in partnership with the United Nations Environmental Programme. The commemoration is held on 5 June each year to promote environmental awareness. The theme for 2008 is climate change. The day is observed annually in more than 100 countries. Last year's event was held in Tromsø, Norway.



Rightcar website launched

A new website allowing car buyers to compare the safety, cleanliness and fuel efficiency of different car makes and models was launched on 6 November. The Land Transport New Zealand website www.rightcar.govt.nz lists the fuel economy, driver safety, passenger safety, air pollutant and carbon dioxide emissions of more than 2300 new and used vehicles.

Sustainable Lincoln goes for Zero Waste

The town of Lincoln, near Christchurch, has had a 'Zero Waste Week' challenging residents to be more environmentally sustainable. The organisers, the Lincoln Envirotown Trust, ran a 'street challenge' where streets competed to produce the least waste as part of the community plan to become a sustainable town. This year's winner was still being judged when this newsletter went to press.

CityHop launched in Auckland

Aucklanders can now rent eco-friendly vehicles by the hour through the CityHop car share service. The scheme, the first of its type in New Zealand, provides rental cars from some Auckland City Council car parks in the central city. The service targets people who need a car occasionally but don't want the cost or hassle of owning a vehicle.

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New Zealand Government