

Sustainability is not only good for the planet – it makes good business sense as well.

This issue profiles two companies that have understood the business potential of good sustainability practice. Design Mobil has been trading for 18 years, while Green Cabs is a new kid on the block – but both are turning their solid sustainability credentials into business success.

As sustainability gains popularity, people are on the lookout for new and more creative ways of living sustainably. Sustainable Living New Zealand runs practical courses around the country that show what's possible. One participant, Keryn Duff, explains on page 3 how she learned to save water without compromising her family's lifestyle.

There are many smart, creative ideas out there on living sustainably, and the new sustainability.govt.nz website is a good place to find them.

Kind regards



Lindsay Gow

DEPUTY SECRETARY
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Swapping stories on sustainability.govt.nz

New Zealanders are signing up to new sustainable living habits – and getting into some lively discussion – thanks to the new sustainability.govt.nz website and 'what's your next step?' sustainability challenge.

Hundreds of people have registered their steps in the sustainability challenge on the website since it was launched on 4 December. The website is chock-full of practical tips and information on how to live more sustainably, and users are adding their own ideas to the knowledge base.

Selected highlights from the website's discussion forum:
Composting – "Composting is great for people that don't



> Te Aomania Te Koha and Manu Prosser of Otari School at the launch of sustainability.govt.nz and the sustainability challenge

want the responsibility of living worms and require less maintenance. You just add all your fruit and veggie scraps, grass clippings, paper towels etc and give it a stir, leaving it in the sun is best but a bit of shade is fine..."

Sustainability 'heroes' – "Ray Anderson of Interface Corporation's story is amazing...essentially overnight, Ray had a grand realisation that his company was having an incredibly huge impact on the planet..." For more information on Interface, visit www.interfacesustainability.com

What motivates you to be sustainable? Several readers respond: "I feel pretty strongly that I have a moral obligation to look after the planet for no other reason than it's the Right Thing to do"... "It isn't my place to ruin the environment for future generations, and it is everyone's responsibility to look after it"... "you reap what you sow"... "It makes sense and feels good"... "Nothing lasts forever"... "It's natural to me now, I don't even need to think about it."

Next steps progress: "I'm much more aware of how much power and water I'm using, and I think I've reduced both considerably...I'm replacing the lightbulbs with power-friendly ones...Solar water heating, this is the second summer – typically no water heating bill from November through March/April...I ride my Vespa to work daily (have had it for three years), ride my bicycle often also."

↳ Making beds sustainably

Dave Macfarlane was into sustainability long before it became fashionable – and his business is now reaping the rewards of his foresight.

For the past 18 years, Design Mobil has been making beds, mattresses and bedroom furniture using sustainable materials and business practice.

“We’ve practised sustainability from day one – it’s not new to us,” says Dave. “It’s just common sense, the way I see it. We’ve got one world and we’ve got to look after it.”

The company’s well-established sustainability ‘street cred’ has given it an edge over the competition. Design Mobil has won 20 major design awards in the past four years, and in October it took top honours at the NZI National Sustainable Business Awards.

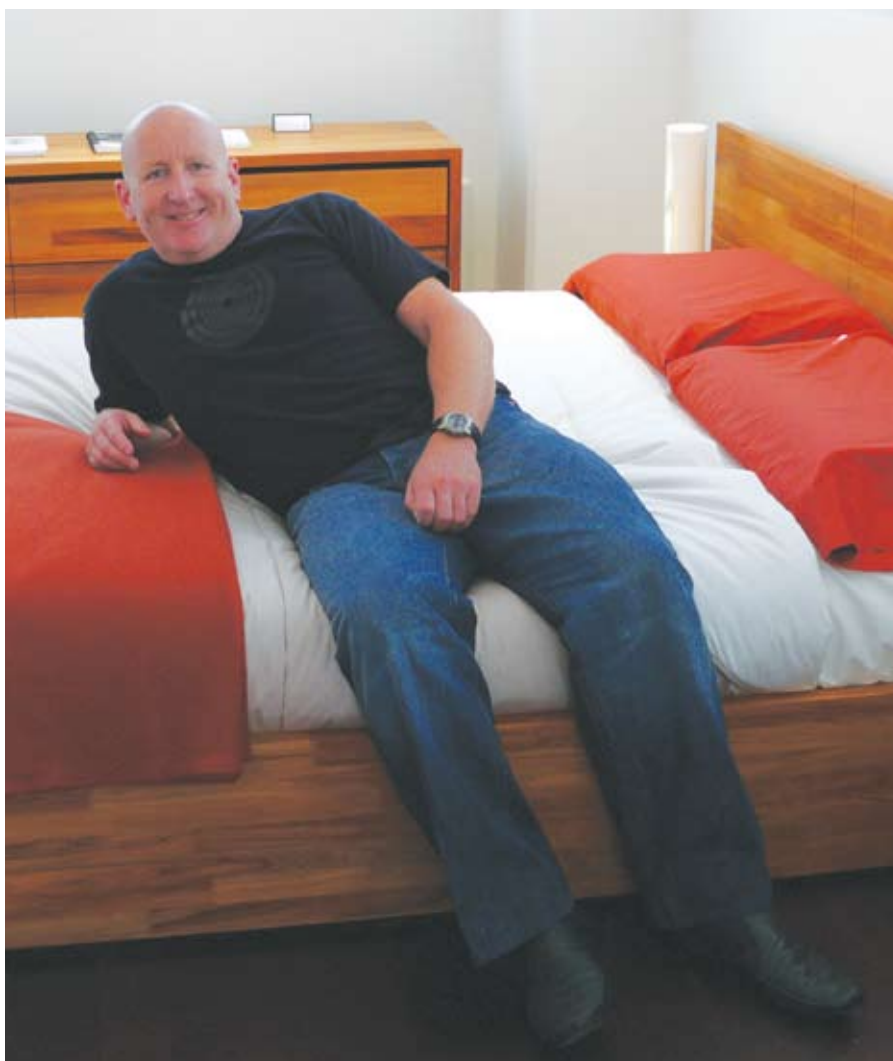
Originally a wholesaler, Design Mobil is now expanding into retailing, opening its Okooko chain of shops in New Zealand and internationally. The first three shops in Hong Kong, Wellington and Philadelphia opened in 2007, and the company is targeting high-value markets: it plans a second store in Hong Kong this year, seven more stores on the US east coast over the next 3-4 years, and is doing market research in the UK, Switzerland and China.

“Sustainability is a big selling point – it adds value to the product. People are willing to pay more for a sustainable product, typically a minimum 15 per cent,” he says.

Most of Design Mobil’s products are made at its Tauranga manufacturing plant. Dave says the company’s designers use sustainable materials whenever possible, and none of its manufacturing waste is sent to landfill.

“We manufacture wood briquettes from our waste wood – they are clean burning with higher heat output than coal.

“We use recycled products where we can – some components in our mattresses are



> Dave Macfarlane

made from reconstituted material, with no compromise to longevity or quality.

“Our pillowcases, sheets, quilts and mattress covers are made from bamboo fibre. That has reduced our use of cotton significantly – 30 per cent of the world’s insecticides are used on cotton plantations. Bamboo is naturally regenerating, hypo-allergenic, and doesn’t need pesticides and herbicides.

“All our timber comes from sustainably managed forests in the North Island. It’s all native timber, heli-harvested. The forest is mapped with GPS and the coordinates go into the helicopter.”

For Dave, sustainability extends well beyond just environmental concerns – “it’s about people, profit, planet and

passion, looking after staff and local communities,” he says.

Through the Environmental Resource Sustainability Trust, the company donates trees for its recycling in schools programme. “For every three sacks of paper and cardboard they recycle, we donate a tree,” he says. “We’ve planted over 60,000 native trees with Tauranga City Council.”

In addition to that, the company plants trees to offset its carbon emissions. “I’m the biggest polluter in the company in terms of my air travel, but we’re offsetting that,” Dave says. “Our goal is a zero footprint or better, and we don’t believe in buying carbon credits.”

↘ Keryn kicks the water waste habit

Busy mother-of-three Keryn Duff never thought much about her family's water use. But thanks to a Sustainable Living course, she now understands the easy steps she can take to use water well.

"For example, I now know that my top-loading washing machine uses more than 150 litres per load, whereas some front loaders only use about 60," she says. "I am looking at replacing mine this year and have already started investigating different brands.

"I'm always telling the kids to 'turn that tap off!' when they're cleaning their teeth or washing their hands, and they're starting to get into the new habit. I am careful about filling up the kettle only as much as I need, which saves power too."

Keryn's one-term evening course in Havelock North was run by Environment Centre Hawke's Bay, with support from Hawke's Bay Regional Council. Similar courses, coordinated by Sustainable Living New Zealand and supported by the Ministry for the Environment, are run in 20 other centres. As well as water use, they cover energy efficiency, waste reduction, shopping tips, travel, vegetable gardening and eco-building.

Keryn has introduced shorter showers for the family, and she collects cold water from the shower in a bucket, before it runs hot, for later re-use in the garden.

"I was surprised how much water is collected that would otherwise be wasted. It's nearly a whole bucket each time. We also wash the car on the grass instead of the driveway, with a bucket and sponge instead of a hose. That way we protect the storm-drains and streams from detergent.

"I am also more careful about the products we use. I use lemon juice to soak the cloths instead of bleach, I buy eco-friendly cleaning products, and unbleached toilet

paper. I'm sure this will help keep my septic tank in better order.

"For the future I am looking at recycling systems for grey water – I was not aware of them before, but they seem such a great idea – and also at getting a tank installed to collect rainwater off our new shed roof."

Course details are available at www.sustainableliving.org.nz or phone the National Coordinator on 03 960 2656.



> Water-smart Keryn Duff re-uses the hottie water on her veggie patch

↘ Environmental stock-take out soon

Did you know:

- In the past two years, the area of private conservation land increased by more than half?
- Around three-quarters of New Zealanders can do kerbside recycling, up from 20 per cent ten years ago?
- Nearly 80 per cent of New Zealand's allocated water is used for irrigation?

These nuggets are among the wealth of data covered in *Environment New Zealand 2007*, the second national report on the state of New Zealand's environmental health. The report, to be released on 31 January, is produced by the Ministry for the Environment, with help from a number of agencies across government.

The report is designed to help environmental decision-makers make well-informed decisions. It presents quantitative information on key aspects of the New Zealand environment, using

new and existing data, and it tracks how these have changed over time. It also sets benchmarks for monitoring changes.

The environmental themes covered include changing household consumption, transport and energy use, and waste disposal trends. It also reports on the state of our air, atmosphere, land, freshwater, oceans and biodiversity.

For more information about the report, contact enz07@mfe.govt.nz

↳ **Sustaina-briefs**

Climate change festival

Roz Perry and Merinda-Lee Hassall, from the Ministry for the Environment (pictured), talk sustainability to patrons at the Global Day of Action on Climate Change held on 8 December. The Wellington event, mirrored in other cities, included speeches and music from the Wellington International Ukelele Orchestra and the Wellington Community Choir.



↳ **Home Energy Rating Scheme**

Independent, tailored information on how to make homes warmer, healthier and cost less to run is now available to homeowners under the Home Energy Ratings scheme launched on 17 December. Under the scheme, assessors give 'star' energy efficiency ratings to homes and recommend cost effective ways to improve energy efficiency.

Launching the scheme, Government Energy Efficiency and Conservation spokesperson Jeanette Fitzsimons said: "Most people wouldn't buy a car without an AA check. Yet a home costs much more than a car, and lasts longer... This voluntary scheme will provide homeowners with the information they need to make informed choices around the way they use energy in their houses."

Australia, China to ban plastic bags

The Australian and Chinese governments have both announced plans to do away with free plastic shopping bags this year. Australian Environment Minister Peter Garrett said his government hoped to completely phase out plastic shopping bags by the end of the year: "We want to phase them out, so do the states, we think it's absolutely critical to get cracking on it." The Chinese government said it would place a nationwide ban on stores distributing free plastic bags from 1 June. All manufacture of ultra-thin plastic bags would be banned, and supermarkets would have to charge for any bags they provide. Australia uses about four billion plastic shopping bags a year, while China uses about three billion bags every day.

Green Cabs are go

Taxi patrons are going Green – so much so that Green Cabs managing director Dave Jordan (pictured) is "desperate for drivers". Launched in Wellington last year, Green Cabs' popularity has led to expansion to Auckland, with other cities likely to follow. "People are walking past other cabs to get into ours," Dave says. Green Cabs use an all-hybrid vehicle fleet, and they are heavily into carbon offsetting: "Our goal is to offset all our carbon emissions," Dave says. "We have committed to setting off carbon emissions from companies that use us for their taxi travel."

The company aims to plant trees "the right way" in New Zealand and around the world – "we are looking at native trees that are right for their environment," Dave says.

Green Cabs is working on achieving ISO verification in environmental management standards and carbon neutrality.



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