

Half of all New Zealanders believe there is a very urgent need to protect the environment, and another 47 per cent say this is somewhat urgent.

That's the broad finding from the latest round of research into household sustainability attitudes and behaviours commissioned by the Ministry for the Environment.

The findings were consistent with other research showing that the vast majority of New Zealanders are concerned about the environment, although their other responses show there is plenty of scope for more action.

For example, survey respondents showed high levels of willingness to do actions such as selecting water efficient appliances, recycling unwanted electrical items, and composting kitchen and garden waste if they were not already doing so.

The research findings, covered inside, will help identify areas where policy interventions can be targeted.

Kind Regards



Lindsay Gow

DEPUTY SECRETARY
MINISTRY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

➤ New fund to help reduce landfill waste

A new central government levy on landfill rubbish will create a fund to help finance recycling infrastructure and other waste minimisation projects.



Under the Waste Minimisation Act 2008, a levy of \$10 per tonne will be applied on all landfill waste from 1 July 2009. Landfill operators may pass on this cost to households and businesses, although it will create a minimal increase of around 20 cents per rubbish bag.

Paul Kennel, Waste Minimisation Implementation Manager for the Ministry, says the Act was not intended to change behaviours by dis-incentivising rubbish disposal – the main point was to establish a fund for waste minimisation activities.

“New Zealand lacks infrastructure for recycling – there’s only so far we can go with recycling right now, some has to be sent overseas,” he says. “The Act aims to raise money to help infrastructure, along with education and other mechanisms that encourage recycling.”

Half the estimated \$31 million raised each year will be allocated directly to councils on a population basis, although this is conditional. “They will only get their share if they have a waste minimisation strategy in place and adopted,” Paul says. “It will be audited to ensure the money is used for waste minimisation.”

The other half of the pool will form a contestable fund, the Waste Minimisation Fund, from which local government, communities, businesses and other organisations can apply for waste minimisation activities.

Paul and his team have been writing to and meeting with councils, and running workshops around the country with landfill operators, to help them prepare for the levy implementation.

The Act also encourages greater use of product stewardship schemes, whereby product producers take ‘cradle to grave’ responsibility for the environmental effects of their products.

While these product stewardship schemes remain voluntary for now, Paul says the government will consult with industry this year on whether mandatory schemes are needed for ‘priority’ products such as oil, agri-chemicals, compact fluorescent lamps, packaging, e-waste and refrigerants.

“The consultation process will also include discussion on criteria for the Waste Minimisation Fund, and we encourage readers to submit their views as part of the process,” Paul says.

Revamped Eco Kiwi due soon



> Eco team: Wellington Eco Kiwi community networkers Nigel Taptiklis, Grace Leung, Alice Rufino, Shanel Vettori, Kanchana Subedi and Peri Te Wao.

The Eco Kiwi household sustainability advice programme is turning to technology and volunteer networks to build on its initial success and to reach out to more homes.

The Environment Ministry-funded project, which started in the Wellington and Otago regions in September 2007, has enabled 14 community networkers to provide free advice to households on sustainability improvement. The project aims to get households to focus on a single priority action to improve their own personal well-being as well as benefiting the environment.

Project Coordinator Hilary Campbell, of the Sustainability Trust, says the initial results are very encouraging, with two-thirds of householders going on to take the actions that they first agreed to.

“We got a very high uptake,” she says. “The challenges were – how can we scale it better, and how can we evaluate it? If evaluation is not done well it can be time consuming, costly and impede the actual engagement process.”

So for the latter part of last year, Hilary and the project team have built on experiences from 2007 to develop the model further. When the engagements resume early this year, volunteers from existing community networks will provide the advice, with training from the Trust.

They will be supported by new and improved information technology that will mirror the face-to-face engagement process as well as enabling outcomes to be tracked across the whole programme. Data from individual participants will be collected and analysed, providing much improved information about the effectiveness of different actions.

“The software will facilitate programme delivery, track outcomes, and put an indicative value on the outcomes, such as total kilowatt hours of energy saved,” Hilary says.

It would also enable better communication with households, for example by prompting households to repeat their initial ‘snapshot’ survey sometime later to test the effectiveness of their sustainability actions.



↘ Carterton gets water-wise

The small Wairarapa town of Carterton is setting standards of water conservation that larger centres would be proud of.

The town's 2000 properties use one-third less water now than they did a year ago, following the introduction of water metering and charging for excess water use.

Much of the savings have come from the local Council's efforts to find leaks. Inspectors visit properties where meter readings show that water use appears higher than normal, and this often leads to discoveries of previously unidentified dripping taps or cracked pipes.

Carterton District Council Operations Manager Garry Baker says that metering and charging has led to changed public awareness of the importance of water conservation.

"It's amazing how people are getting on board with it. They worry about how much they are using," he says.

The Council began installing water meters three years ago, and they are now in place in all but "one or two" properties, Garry says. On 1 July last year, the Council began charging all users for water use of more than 300 cubic metres (300,000 litres) a year, at a rate of \$1.50 per cubic metre above the limit.

The Council also began contacting owners of properties with high water use and after inspection found that 63 of those properties had leaks.

Carterton historically has experienced summer water shortages, although Garry is confident that the town's new water-wise ethos, along with a new storage tank, will stave off problems this summer.



↘ Environmental protection a shared duty – survey

Now more people believe that caring for the environment is the collective responsibility of the wider community rather than the government alone, survey results show.

When asked who was responsible for protecting and caring for the environment, 83 per cent of respondents to the Ministry for the Environment-commissioned survey said all New Zealanders, while 32 per cent said the government.

The latest results compare with a benchmark survey in 2007 where only 39 per cent agreed that environmental care was everyone's responsibility, and 41 per cent felt the government should take care of it.

The Household Sustainability Survey 2008, by Research New Zealand, found that the general public's knowledge of environmental issues was mixed. More than half felt they knew a lot or a fair amount about climate change and global warming, while terms like carbon footprint, CO₂ emissions and carbon offsetting resonated much less.

Despite this, big majorities believe that New Zealand households generate too much rubbish and waste (87 per cent), and that water supply is limited and should not be wasted (86 per cent). Almost everyone (97 per cent) believes that the need for environmental protection is very urgent or somewhat urgent.

Three-quarters of respondents now believe they are acting in an environmentally sustainable way – only 1 per cent of them claim to apply this in everything they do, though 22 per cent say they apply this in most things, and 52 per cent claim they apply this in quite a few things.

However, nearly three-quarters (71 per cent) expressed interest in becoming more sustainable, and in learning more about what they can do to care for the environment (74 per cent).

The nationwide survey of 1000 people was conducted in September 2008. The research results can be seen at www.mfe.govt.nz/publications/sus-dev/household-sustainability-survey-11-2008/index.html

➤ Sustaina-briefs

Film award

Environment Ministry Deputy Secretary Lindsay Gow presents Team Waiheke of Auckland's Waiheke High School, with an award for their film *Matariki 2008* documenting a school hangi. The film won the Sustainable Future Award at *The Outlook for Someday* youth film-makers awards at TVNZ in Auckland on 4 December. Visit www.theoutlookforsomeday.net/vote/ to vote for your favourite film out of the 20 winning films.



Sustainable building guide

The ITM group of building supply stores has launched two building guides on sustainable building and waste minimisation. The sustainable building guide provides builders and homeowners with information on air quality, energy and water efficiency, home heating, water and solar heating, insulation, lighting and passive design. The waste minimisation guide provides advice to builders on minimising construction waste. The guides, produced in association with the Building Research Association of New Zealand (BRANZ), are available at www.itm.co.nz/sustainability

Bringing back the birds

Pupils at Auckland's Bayswater Primary School are working on a five-year project to attract native birds to the school grounds, helped by a \$50,000 donation from the Tindall Foundation. School principal Chris Heney told the *New Zealand Herald* that class plans to bring back the birds include a weta house, a vegetable garden, a dry riverbed and a native plant area. Steven Tindall is an ex-pupil at Bayswater, and the school has also gained a \$4000 Environmental Initiative grant from Auckland Regional Council for the project.

Hostels flush less

Youth hostels around the country are installing water-saving devices in their toilets after a successful trial at the two Auckland hostels. The hostel toilets will be fitted with "CleverFlush" PVC bags, which are filled with water and hung inside the toilet cistern, saving up to two litres of water per flush without affecting toilet performance.

Climate Action

Visitors to the 350 New Zealand Climate Action Festival checked the latest advice on living sustainably. The picnic-style Festival, held on 6 December at Wellington's Waitangi Park, was part of an international day of action on climate change. "350" refers to atmospheric concentration of carbon dioxide in parts per million – organisers claim 350 ppm is safe for the planet, although the current concentration is 387 ppm.



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