

talk sustainability update

Talk sustainability will be discontinued after the next issue. We thank readers for your interest over the past 18 months. The final issue will let you know other sources of information on sustainability developments in New Zealand.

New Zealanders' enthusiasm for recycling continues to grow despite the challenges facing the recycling industry.

Councils are picking this up by bringing in more sophisticated waste separation schemes aimed at re-using and recycling more material and reducing landfill waste. The private sector is contributing as well – an example is profiled in this issue.

Kind Regards



Lindsay Gow
 DEPUTY SECRETARY
 MINISTRY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

Christchurch goes red, green and yellow

Christchurch is revamping its waste collection systems, with big benefits for the city's 156,000 property owners.



> Wheelie loving their rubbish – Christchurch's new service aims to reduce waste to landfill.

The Garden City is adopting a three-bin kerbside collection system for organics, recycling and rubbish, saving ratepayers' costs, lessening environmental impacts and improving the city's sustainability.

Christchurch joins its neighbour, Timaru, as the second New Zealand city to adopt the system. General rubbish, organics and recyclables will be collected from individual households in separate red, green and yellow-lidded bins.

Fortnightly collection of recycling bins has already started, and from next month the organics and rubbish bins will be distributed and regular collection will begin.

Christchurch City Council project manager Tim Scott says setting up the new system and distributing bins was a huge exercise, involving an up-front capital investment of \$22 million in the processing facilities. But this would be offset over time through lower ongoing costs. The Council's costs of dumping rubbish at the Kate Valley landfill

would fall substantially through an estimated one-third reduction in general rubbish collected.

"The landfill is a regional facility, so the Council pays the same to dispose of rubbish as anyone else," Tim says. "The cost of collecting and composting organics is less than collecting and disposing of it at landfill."

Until now the city has operated an open-bin recycling system, though this wasn't coping with the amount of material that residents wanted to recycle.

"Around 25,000 households were using a private wheelie bin service – they were subsidising the rest of the city [through their rates]," Tim says. "We expect the numbers using the alternative service will reduce substantially."

The new service followed the council's adoption of a Zero Waste by 2015 policy and public consultation on its management plan in 2005.

"Overwhelmingly, residents wanted to divert waste from landfill and become more sustainable," he says.

Other benefits of the new system included more efficient collection, less litter on the streets, and removing the need to use runners to pick up rubbish behind moving trucks.

Adoption of the new system was aided by both the city's recycling and general rubbish collection contracts coming up for renewal on the same day.

"That's different to other councils – it would be quite difficult for a lot of them to do it in one go," Tim says.

↘ NZ new vehicle fleet emits less

The motor vehicle industry welcomed a fall in CO₂ emissions among new vehicles sold in New Zealand last year.

New vehicle CO₂ emissions in New Zealand fell 3.8 per cent to an average 210.7 grams per 100 km in 2008, compared with 219 grams per 100 km in 2007. Perry Kerr, of the Motor Industry Association, says the reduction was equivalent to 1158.9 metric tonnes of CO₂ for the year.

“The new vehicle industry has achieved this environmental improvement without any legislation in place. The reduction in CO₂ emissions is a combination of the continually improving fuel efficiency of new cars, together with a shift in the sales pattern towards smaller vehicles,” he says.

However David Crawford, General Manager Land Transport Environment and Safety at the Ministry of Transport, says the improvement, although welcome, was not as significant as might have been expected given last year’s 50 per cent fuel price rise and the current weak economy.

“There was a big move away from performance vehicles towards small and medium sized four wheel drives. There were more small vehicles sold compared to previous years, but not enough to shift the average vehicle size – the bulk of our fleet is still in the 2.5 to 3 litre range,” he says.

“Recently implemented legislation means that car importers are legally required to report the fuel consumption of all makes and models. This supports measures, such as vehicle fuel economy labelling and the Rightcar website, that help consumers make informed choices about the type of car they buy.”



Clean behind

The back end of this Pavlovich bus looks like any other bus – but it emits almost no CO₂. The bus’s urea-based system soaks up CO₂, producing cleaner exhaust that meets the European Union’s tough Euro 5 emissions standard. Environment Waikato introduced the environmentally friendly bus to their new City Express service last month. Environment Waikato’s land transport operations manager Bevan Dale says that “every little bit helps and we are pleased such a bus is being used in Hamilton.”



↘ EnviroFlexiNet keeps recycling in the bin

Open-bin recycling is well established in most New Zealand communities – but at times, the recycling can turn into rubbish.



> Stopping recycling from becoming rubbish: Tai Haronga demonstrates his EnviroFlexiNet in action.

Wind and scavenging animals can cause bin contents to spill out, creating an unsightly mess and a headache for councils charged with keeping the streets clean.

A Wellington couple believe they have come up with the answer – now they just have to persuade councils to invest.

Tai Haronga invented the EnviroFlexiNet (pictured) as a cheap, easy to use means of keeping recycled materials inside bins before they are emptied. The net is permanently attached and clips easily over the rims at each end of a bin, stretching over the contents and keeping them inside even when the bin is turned upside-down.

A trial of 500 prototype nets with selected Hutt City residents was highly successful, with 99 per cent of users expressing

their approval. Hutt City Environmental Sustainability officer Symond Ross says the net is “definitely a good product” that solves the problem of wind-blown litter from open recycling bins.

Tai’s partner, Amanda Hargreaves, says they now have a manufacturer lined up in China. The first batch of the perfected design, with support from WelTec’s Centre for Smart Product, is due in New Zealand in March.

“Litter from recycling bins is a huge problem. This will save both councils and contractors’ time and money, as collectors won’t have to chase after wind-blown recycling and there won’t be a need for a follow up service to respond to ratepayer complaints,” Amanda says.

“One district council has told us it is keen to provide an EnviroFlexiNet to each household – it says these nets will pay for themselves in two years.”

The product has a New Zealand patent, and orders have been made by Hutt and Dunedin City Councils. The product will be available for purchase at cost by ratepayers in the Hutt, and will be launched in Dunedin at the “Have your say Expo09” in late March.

The EnviroFlexiNet will continue to be promoted to councils around the country and international ventures will begin later in the year.

For more information go to www.enviroflexinet.com

➤ Sustaina-briefs

Eco-electricians

Electricians can now gain a new EcoSmart qualification that equips them to give advice on the growing choice of energy efficient products and technologies. The new Electrical Contractors Association training course covers energy management, lighting, pumps, fans and motors and new solar and wind power technology, among other things. The programme is supported by the Electricity Commission, the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority, Philips, Schneider and Right House.



Green babies

West Auckland newborns will start life sustainably, wearing cloth nappies until they leave Waitakere Hospital. As of last month, all babies born at the hospital will wear cloth nappies. This is expected to save 80,000 disposable nappies going to landfill each year. The West Auckland Health Services Foundation and Waitakere City Council decided to switch to cloth nappies after a three-month trial. Organisers say the trial showed that modern cloth nappies with Velcro fasteners are not difficult to use and don't cost significantly more than disposable nappies.

Work walking

New Zealanders around the country are being encouraged to leave the car at home and walk to work for a day this month. Walk2Work 09 events will be held in 12 cities and towns around the country on 18 March. Each event will feature some complimentary breakfast snacks, speakers and spot prizes. The organisers, Living Streets Aotearoa, say walking to work leads to healthier lifestyles, reduced fuel emissions, more retail spending (at shops along the way), and less traffic congestion. For more information go to www.walk2work.org.nz

Packaging recycled

Almost two-thirds of all packaging used by New Zealanders is now being recycled, beating targets set under the Packaging Accord a year early, the Packaging Council said. Executive Director Paul Curtis says 60 per cent of all packaging is being recycled, with individual targets for paperboard, glass, aluminium, plastic and steel being met or exceeded. The Packaging Accord 2004 sets out targets for packaging recovery by 2009. "Over the last three reporting years, total consumption of packaging has remained almost flat, while recycling has increased significantly," Paul says.

Cleaning up Greenwashing

The Commerce Commission has published guidelines for businesses on how to avoid making untrue or misleading statements about the 'green' credentials of their products and services. The guidelines aim to help businesses comply with the Fair Trading Act when making environmental-related claims. View the guidelines at www.comcom.govt.nz

Smart meters

The introduction of smart meters by several energy companies is being welcomed by the New Zealand Business Council for Sustainable Development. Smart meters allow consumers to use cheaper power when it is available. Chief Executive Peter Neilson says the meters increase the reward for conservation and insulation, and help avoid peaking problems

that put up power prices. "For 20 years people have argued the electricity market hasn't been working fully. One reason is that households can't respond to short term price changes. This is one way for people to know what the current prices are – and make the changes," Peter says. Meridian, Contact, Mercury and Genesis are using the meters.

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