

Zero Waste Update

Please pass on

July 2002, Issue 25

Mission Statement: "To encourage and motivate all sectors of New Zealand society to work towards a target of zero waste."

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Extended Producer Responsibility: Focus on Plastic Bags

Plastic shopping bags are becoming a major environmental concern in many countries around the world. They have caused severe floods through blocking drains over the last couple of decades in Bangladesh costing thousands of people their lives. They have assumed a new identity as the 'national flower' of South Africa because so many get caught up in trees and fences, and Ireland's 'Clean and Green' image was seriously threatened by intense littering of plastic bags - until halting measures were taken.

The environmental implications of polyethylene bags that take hundreds of years to decompose are harsh. Negative outcomes include: the wasted resources locked away in the millions of plastic bags in landfills, the littering of landscapes and waterways, threats to wildlife (100,000 mammals and turtles are killed by plastic debris annually), and toxic gas emissions through burning.

A number of countries are beginning to take positive measures to tackle this problem including charging consumers a levy, or banning them from the market place altogether. New technologies such as starch-based 'bio plastics' are also being commercially introduced. These suit organic waste recovery systems and other specific uses but are no substitute for reducing excessive usage in the first place.

Ireland

The model for reducing plastic bag consumption lies in the **Republic of Ireland**. In March 2002 the Irish government raised a levy on plastic bags in supermarkets and retail stores, charging consumers the equivalent of 30cNZ per bag. Alternative long life bags are now being heavily promoted in stores. The money raised from the levy is being assigned to an Environment Fund which in turn will fund waste management and litter prevention projects. The impact of the tax has been a huge success with stores reporting a 97.5% distribution reduction in plastic bags.

(See full report for the whole story.)

Other plastic bag campaigns around the world

In **Australia**, The 'Bag it' campaign was created to establish a series of one week campaigns aimed at supermarkets promoting alternatives to plastic bags. For more details go to www.toowoomba.qld.gov.au/Residents/healthlinks.html

In March 2002 all polythene bags were banned in **Bangladesh** after they were discovered to be a major culprit in the fatal floods of 1988 and 1998.

In **South Africa** the plastics industry was given 12 months to phase out production of thin plastic shopping bags but fierce opposition by industry has caused the Government to relax their enforcement demands.

India – In **Mumbai** last year the Council banned plastic bags, in **Tamil Nadu** a bill has been introduced to ban non-recyclable plastics and in **Goa** a local community project is leading a campaign to promote alternatives to plastic carrier bags to tackle the problem of choked drains.

Asia - Taiwan is moving towards banning the free distribution of plastic bags and the **Singapore** government is launching a campaign to discourage their use.

In **Canada** almost all big grocery stores take bags back for recycling. Check out www.bra.org/plastic_bags.htm for some interesting facts about plastic bag use in Canada.

In **Hong Kong** the "Use fewer plastic bags" campaign led to savings of 35 million plastic bags by retailers in its first year.

The **UK** Environment minister Michael Meacher is investigating the Irish model of raising levies on plastic bags and if no serious problems are found there will be a strong case for introducing a similar measure there within the next few months.

For the full report on plastic bag campaigns in New Zealand and overseas (including biodegradable packaging) contact lucy@zerowaste.co.nz or download a Pdf from the website www.zerowaste.co.nz under 'Resources & Links'

EMAIL YOUR NEWS AND VIEWS TO lucy@zerowaste.co.nz

Zero Heroes: The Plastic Bag Crusaders

Individuals across **New Zealand** share deep concerns about the increasing usage of plastic bags and the lack of industry or government intervention to reduce them. A number of individuals are developing their own campaigns.

For example, Annelies Pikelharing and Cath Knight, based in Christchurch, are hoping to see a national campaign established which would lead to non-degradable plastic bags being phased out over time and replaced by sustainable alternatives such as jute or hemp.

Annelies and Cath have conducted research into the efforts of supermarkets to reduce their plastic bag distribution.

A proposal has now been submitted to Christchurch City Council with the aim of minimising the distribution of plastic checkout bags. The proposal includes suggesting supermarkets introduce a fee on plastic bags, asking customers whether they need bags, promoting long-life bags made from sustainable materials, and replacing all other packaging used for packing loose foods with biodegradable bags. It also focuses on making supermarkets aware of the environmental impacts of using polyethylene bags, highlighting overseas trends especially government legislation, and getting maximum leverage out of projects already underway in New Zealand.

Annelies and Cath are very interested to hear from other individuals or organisations around New Zealand who are working on this issue in their local area.

Contact Annelies on 03 325 1229 or email anneliesp@xtra.co.nz or Cath at cath.knight@clear.net.nz

Cath Knight (L) and Annelies Pikelharing (R) - leading lights in the plastic bag campaign.



Community News

Innovative Waste Kaikoura has achieved national recognition by winning an award from the Ministry for the Environment's 2002 Green Ribbon Awards for reducing Kaikoura landfill waste and its recycling and eco-employment initiatives.

Kahurangi Employment Trust's recycling centre receives an abundance of unwanted household items such as 1970's lampshades and old ironing boards. However, instead of stockpiling these goods, the centre has used its imagination to make gates out of old bikes and transform an old TV into a mirror. The creator of the bike-gate has taken orders for a similar invention and there is potential to establish a cottage industry at the centre, creating useful objects out of unwanted goods. Contact Andy Budd on 03 548 1778 or ket@paradise.net.nz.

The bike-gate



Incinerator proposal scrapped

A controversial proposal to build a high-tech double stack incinerator at Kennington, Southland, has been scrapped. Ten Kennington residents formed an environment group to oppose the proposal. They were concerned about air pollution and the possibility that waste products could pollute bore and rain water. The wider community also held concerns over what would be burned.

The Southland Times, 10/06/02.

Slash Trash Cool School Awards

The Gardens School, Manurewa was awarded the prize of Best School, sponsored by the Zero Waste New Zealand Trust as part of the Slash Trash Cool School Programme in Manukau City.

Teachers and students at the new school demonstrated a huge amount of enthusiasm for the project and from day one were generating only 1/2 bag

of residual waste each week, by setting up a worm farm and establishing classroom recycling systems.

For more information on the efforts of The Gardens School, contact Noline Skeet, principle, on 09 269 0041 or nolines@thegardens.school.nz

Skill Sharing Programmes

Community Internship Programme

This is a skill-sharing programme through which the Community Development Group of the Department of Internal Affairs provides grants for placing experienced and skilled people from the public, private and community sector with host community organisations. They work as 'interns' for six months on a project determined by the community organisation, then return to their previous work and share their experience, skills and ideas with their home organisation.

The information pack, including application forms, is available from the Department of Internal Affairs website www.dia.govt.nz

The Golden Bay Papercrete Group, Takaka, Golden Bay, is looking for someone with an engineering and/or business background to work with them to research and develop papercrete and other remanufacturing ideas from recovered resources. Contact Ro and Joanna Piekarski at rojoanna@ihug.co.nz if you can help.

United Way – Employee Community Involvement Programmes

United Way has begun a new corporate volunteering venture called Employee Community Involvement (ECI) offering community groups and businesses a variety of mutually beneficial ways to work together.

Programmes include Team Challenge (a one day exercise where a group of employees work together to complete a project), Development Assignments (a short term employee secondment to a community agency), secondments (a longer term placement lasting between 3 months and 2 years) and Business on Board (placing corporate "governance" volunteers onto Boards). For more information contact Ian Leader, Director – Employee Community Involvement, 09 377 2544 or ilunited-way@xtra.co.nz

Guest Column

'Measuring waste diversion: how far we have come along the path to Zero Waste'

written by Anne Lister, Env. Health, Gisborne District Council

When updating our Waste Strategy in 1999 we came to the conclusion that using one-year's landfill disposal figures as the main measure against which to judge future waste minimisation was flawed. The reasons include:

- The year chosen as the base-line has a significant effect on the way subsequent years are judged.
- It takes no account of previous reductions in waste to landfill.
- No consideration is given to economic growth or substantial waste producing projects.
- No consideration is given to where the waste may be going and whether it is an improved waste management method.

If we monitor our progress by measuring waste to landfill are we getting a true measure of improved waste practices or could it be misleading?

Measuring the amount of waste that goes to landfill is but a small, albeit very important, component in the overall picture of what is happening with waste in a district.

To determine the total waste stream we needed a very clear understanding of the activities in the region and the waste they generated. Our biggest challenge was deciding what is waste. In Gisborne's case, waste could include:

Organic waste that used to be landfilled but is now used as stockfood; tree prunings to fuel a wood burner to generate heat that could otherwise go to landfill; shelter belt trimmings that could be mulched, burnt or landfilled; forestry prunings; fruit left in orchards and dead stock.

With this in mind an attempt was made to estimate the total waste stream in the district and to consider what percentage disposal to landfill represented.

Our result for 2001 was a total waste stream of 190,000 tonnes of which 18,000 tonnes goes to landfill.

As a Zero Waste Council we feel that total waste stream measurement is most relevant to the overall picture and should be included in the

reporting of progress on waste minimisation as outlined in the New Zealand Waste Strategy. It is not an easy measurement to make and there needs to be a nationally recognised methodology.

For more info contact Anne Lister at anne@gdc.govt.nz or call 06 867 2049.

If you have any views you would like to express in this column, please send your article to lucy@zerowaste.co.nz

Zero Waste Council News in Brief

Rodney District Council Zero Hero Awards

Rodney District Council has initiated a "Zero Hero" award system recognising outstanding efforts in reducing volumes of waste going to landfill. The council wants to recognise the efforts of the innovative reusers, recyclers and composters in local neighbourhoods, schools and communities.

The first Zero Hero is a local jeweller who has been collecting batteries from watches, calculators and hearing aids rather than sending them to landfill. They are sent to Auckland for safe disposal.

Mayor John Law presented the award and a \$50 voucher for a local restaurant to Rodney's first Zero Hero.

Zero Hero awards will be presented every two months, with an annual prize-giving ceremony.

Sheryl Mai, ZW Coordinator for Rodney DC and Mayor John Law (R) presenting the Zero Hero Award to Neil Gibbs (L).



Hastings District Council

Apologies to Hastings DC for a typo error in the last Update. The 60% increase was in the use of the recycling depot and not in recycling figures.

RONZ Regional Workshops

The Recycling Operators of New Zealand are holding a series of regional workshops throughout the country with the Ministry for the Environment. The workshops will provide a better understanding of what the NZ Waste Strategy means to recycling and waste minimisation service providers, operators and educators. The tour starts in Christchurch on 22nd July.

For the full list of dates contact Julie Dennis at RONZ at info@ronz.org.nz / 09 488 9449 or lucy@zerowaste.co.nz

Business News

Glass Concrete

Australian company CSRIO Sustainable Materials Engineering has given the go ahead for local council, recyclers, municipal engineers and private contractors to start looking at using glass concrete for a range of construction applications. These include bike paths, footpaths, kerbs, gutters and similar work.

Extensive testing has shown that waste glass that is crushed and screened is an excellent substitution for sand in concrete.

Benefits include saving on landfill cost, the establishment of secondary markets and replacing natural aggregate resources with recycled material.

For a copy of the specification go to www.ecorecycle.vic.gov.au or contact Robert Peile, Business Development Manager, at Robert.Peile@csiro.au or 0061 3 9252 6587.

Double Bargain Offer!!

Nova Scotia in Canada has now reached 50% diversion from landfill through reducing, reusing, recycling and composting.

Several resources are now available from the Zero Waste Office detailing their waste reduction efforts.

"On the road to zero waste - Part 1, Nova Scotia: community responsibility in action" video, narrated by Dr. Paul Connett, and

"Champions for the Environment", Annual Report by Nova Scotia's Resource Recovery Board, showcasing six people whose group or industry has gone above and beyond to champion these efforts.

Available together for \$17 from the Zero Waste Office.

Resources

Wise up with the web

Further information following on with the plastic bag focus.

www.environ.ie/environ/envindex.html - the Irish Department of the Environment and Local Government's website for information on the plastic bag levy, a retailers guide to the levy and waste management regulations for 2001.

www.toowoomba.qld.gov.au/Residents/healthlinks.html for an excellent list of Australian links including the 'Bag It' Campaign.

www.bra.org/plastic_bags.htm - the Bluewater Recycling Association in Ontario has some interesting facts about plastic bag use in Canada on this site.

www.potatopak.com for information on 100% biodegradable and compostable food packaging

www.novamont.com for information on the BioBag, made from Mater-Bi, the biodegradable starch based material.

www.biocycle.net for stories on composting and biodegradable packaging

www.bpiworld.org for information on the International Biodegradable Products Institute.

Other resources

www.worldwatch.org/worldsummit/timeline - The Path to Johannesburg. Follow the run up to the World Summit being held in Johannesburg this August.

www.greenoffice.org.nz - the MfE funded green office guide prepared by a band of AEBN helpers has recently been launched at this new site. It contains excellent resources and systematic ways of greening your office. Easy to use, relevant and definitely worth a visit.

Education

Enviroschools funding boost

Enviroschools, a project dedicated to implementing environmental education programmes in schools, including zero waste programmes, has received funding to develop its work over the next couple of years. Contact Heidi Mardon on 04 235 5939 or email heidi.mardon@enviroschools.org.nz for information about the Enviroschools programme.

An extra \$5.9 million over four years has been allocated in this year's budget to improve environmental programmes in schools. The new money will be used to fund advisors at colleges of education who can provide environmental resources and advice for teachers.

EERST

The team at **Environmental Education and Resource Sustainability Trust** has recently expanded. EERST was set up to complement council funded school and community education programmes teaching waste minimisation in the Bay of Plenty region, Jamie Troughton recently joined Paula Inglis in the Cleaner Production (CP) team to talk to businesses, orchards and farms throughout the Western Bay of Plenty region, advising them how to reduce waste and bolster bottom lines.

The Western Bay of Plenty District Council has adopted a zero waste policy and is currently consulting with the public on proposed options to reduce waste going to landfill by 2015. Contact Jamie Troughton on 07 544 8321 or jtroughton@xtra.co.nz for more details on CP.

Events

Wastebusters Trust Canterbury is holding its 7th annual

Winter Waste Fest,

10th – 24th August in Ashburton.

The festival aims to increase community awareness of the need to reduce, reuse, recycle and respect through art, creativity and education.

A large number of events will be taking place over the two weeks including a Zero Waste Challenge – Reuse Recycle Awards.

For more details contact 03 308 9998 or email mcwastebusters@clear.net.nz or visit www.wastebusters.orcon.net.nz

International news

Zero Waste UK

A Zero Waste Charter was launched at Westminster recently, and was signed by Bath & North East Somerset Council (the first ZW Council in the UK), Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth.

Braintree Council was the first Council to adopt this charter, which has set a target of Zero Waste by 2020 with interim targets of 50% and 75% recycling and composting by 2010 and 2015 respectively, and demands the end of mixed waste incineration and the establishment of a zero waste agency.

15,500 residents and 11 councils objected to the final consultation on the Essex Waste Plan which permits incinerators at six locations.

Paula Whitney of Essex Friends of the Earth said "Well done Braintree!! The Government must listen to people from across Britain who want recycling and composting, not polluting incinerators and landfills!"

For more details, contact Paula at paula.essexfoe@btopenworld.com.

Bottle Bills

Germany's highest court has passed a law forcing shops to put levy deposits on nearly all drink cans and bottles. Plans include introducing a 25 euro cent (50 NZ c) deposit for each can or bottle, with larger containers carrying 50 euro cent deposit (NZ\$1). This bill will take effect from January 1st 2003.

Warmer Bulletin, June 2002

Hawa'i'i 11th Bottle Bill State

The USA's 11th bottle bill has been signed into law and Hawa'i'i is the first state to enact beverage container deposit law since California in 1986. The Hawaii bottle bill would impose a 5 cent deposit on all beverage cans and bottles except milk, beginning in 2005. The deposits would be refunded to consumers when the beverage containers are returned for recycling. The bill also phases in an additional charge of up to one and a half cents per beverage container that the state Health Department would use to support recycling.

For more info contact the Container Recycling Institute through www.bottlebill.org and www.container-recycling.org.

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