



Managing Waste in New Zealand

THE NEW ZEALAND WASTE STRATEGY

The basis for the Ministry's waste work is *The New Zealand Waste Strategy* which we developed in partnership with Local Government New Zealand. Since 2002 it has been guiding our work on reducing waste, recovering resources and better managing residual waste in New Zealand.

The strategy has three goals:

- to lower the social costs and risks of waste
- to reduce damage to the environment from waste generation and disposal
- to increase economic benefit by more efficient use of materials.

Thirty national targets for dealing with priority waste issues in New Zealand cover waste minimisation, organics, special wastes, construction and demolition wastes, hazardous wastes, organochlorines, trade wastes and waste disposal.

Progress under the strategy targets is now being reviewed and the results will be available in December 2006. Progress made on waste management in New Zealand since 1995 is described in more detail in *Waste Management in New Zealand – A Decade of Progress* (October 2005).

CONSTRUCTION AND DEMOLITION WASTE

Construction and demolition (C & D) waste comprises a range of materials from concrete, plasterboard and wood to steel, brick and glass. This sort of waste represents approximately 50 percent of all waste generated in New Zealand, 20 percent of all waste going to landfill and 80 percent of all waste going to clean-fill. Much of this waste can be reduced, reused or recovered.

The New Zealand Waste Strategy has set a target of 50 percent reduction in construction and demolition waste being disposed of to landfills by 2008. Government is

working on a number of initiatives to reduce the amount of this waste being produced, for example:

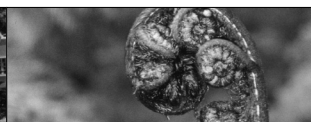
- promoting the Resource Efficiency in Building and Related Industries (REBRI) guidelines – practical guidance for reducing C & D waste
- encouraging inclusion of principles of resource efficiency in industry training qualifications (for example, architecture, engineering and carpentry courses)
- running workshops for large construction or demolition firms, based on the REBRI guidelines
- promoting recovery of C & D waste through resource recovery parks.

HAZARDOUS WASTE MANAGEMENT

Hazardous waste comes from many sources – industry, small businesses, school laboratories, and households. A waste is considered hazardous if it poses a risk to people or the environment, when it is not properly managed, stored, transported and disposed of.

To address hazardous waste, we are:

- developing a national working definition of hazardous waste. This will provide consistency in defining hazardous waste, for the purposes of resource consents, waste management planning, and other aspects of hazardous waste management
- developing guidelines for management of hazardous waste, in partnership with industry and local government
- developing a tracking system for liquid and hazardous waste. This is an internet based database – called WasteTRACK – which consolidates data to track liquid and hazardous wastes from generation, through transport to treatment or disposal.



NEW ZEALAND PACKAGING ACCORD 2004–2009

The Packaging Council of New Zealand and the Ministry for the Environment have brought together brand owners, retailers, importers, manufacturers, recyclers and local government under a New Zealand Packaging Accord.

Signed in 2004, this Accord is already improving the sustainability of packaging in New Zealand. Some key achievements are:

- a Glass Forum established to keep glass recycling on track despite a drop in price for recycled glass. Projects to find alternative uses for glass cullet are underway
- successful recovery of 72 percent of paper packaging
- establishment of an Environmental Beverage Action Group which has conducted event and public place recycling initiatives
- continued innovation in packaging design to protect the environment.

For the next year, the Packaging Accord will focus on improving the quantitative information on packaging through the use of bar codes for tracking and tracing. It will also raise public awareness on the need to reduce, reuse and recycle packaging.

WASTE MINIMISATION (SOLIDS) BILL

A Member's Bill from Nandor Tanczos (Green Party) has been referred to the Local Government and Environment Select Committee in Parliament. This is known as the Waste Minimisation (Solids) Bill and it proposes to:

- establish a Waste Minimisation Authority
- establish Waste Control Authorities
- introduce bans on the disposal of specific materials to landfill
- create a levy on every tonne of waste which is sent for disposal
- provide for extended producer responsibility programmes to be required for certain products for all organisations
- require all organisations in New Zealand to adopt and implement waste minimisation plans
- require all public organisations to implement green procurement policies which give priority to purchasing products and services which either reduce waste or support markets for recycled materials.

Although the Government considers the Bill in its current form to be detailed and prescriptive, it supported its referral to the Select Committee so that wider consideration could be given to the issues. Public submissions to the Select Committee closed on 1 September 2006. Select Committee hearings are expected to take place in October/November 2006.

PRODUCT STEWARDSHIP

Under product stewardship schemes, producers, brand owners, importers, retailers, consumers and other parties accept responsibility for the environmental effects of their products – from production to disposal.

Industry, often together with the Ministry for the Environment and local government, has set up a number of voluntary schemes to reduce the environmental impact of certain products. There are currently schemes in place for products such as packaging, oil, tyres, paint, computers, and cell phones.

Government is committed to industry-led voluntary product stewardship schemes. It also wants to give more strength to voluntary schemes, to allow them to work even more successfully. Industry, the public, councils and environmental organisations have asked for this.

To address this we have been developing a policy framework for product stewardship. In July 2005 we published a discussion document in which Government stated a preference for voluntary schemes with backstop legislation.

WASTE LEVIES

The Minister for the Environment has asked us for advice on options for waste levies in New Zealand. These levies would be placed on waste destined for final disposal, and be used to raise funds for waste minimisation initiatives. Options are a national levy or local waste levies.

We are looking at how a waste levy might work and how it would complement product stewardship schemes.

Government intends to hear stakeholder views on a full range of waste management issues, such as levies and product stewardship, through the Select Committee process on the Waste Minimisation (Solids) Bill before finalising its preferred policy option.