

FROM THE EDITOR1
FROM THE PRESIDENT1
TIME TO THINK BIG, FOR THE ENVIRONMENT..2
ENGAGEMENT IN WASTE MINIMISATION.....3
CONFERENCES AND TRAINING5

NZ Chapter Newsletter
EIANZ

August 2010

FROM THE EDITOR

Erik van Eyndhoven

This month's newsletter is shorter than usual, but makes up for it with a couple of great articles! The deadline for contributions to the next NZ Chapter newsletter will be Friday the 5th of November 2010

– send your articles, news items, events or ideas to Tom Burkitt (nzpresident@eianz.org.nz).

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Tom Burkitt (nzpresident@eianz.org.nz)

Our New Executive Team

It is a pleasure for me to introduce your new Executive Committee for 2010/11. At the AGM on 8th July, several new executive members were voted in, and your Chapter committee is now comprised as follows:

- Tom Burkit - Chapter President
- Vanessa Browne - Vice President
- Jeska McNicol - Councilor
- Heike Schiele - Secretary
- Ced Croft - Treasurer

Committee Members:

- Susan Harris
- Simon Beale
- Brian Barone
- Leo Feitje
- Craig Redmond

- Professor Ian Spellerberg

Jeska, Susan, Heike, and Brian will bring an enormous amount to our team, and I know I'm going to enjoy working with them. This is a strong committee dedicated to growing the Institute in NZ and improving the quality of its services to and representation of environmental practitioners.

Our Newsletter

Erik Van Eyndhoven has decided to step down after 2 years as our newsletter editor. He has done a great job for us and I thank him for his effort in refreshing the newsletter and producing it regularly. I have made arrangements with EoS Ecology (www.eosecology.co.nz) to take over the production of our Chapter newsletter. They are ecologists with a passion for science communication and have developed a successful "Information Design" business line. Their skill in his area will help us enormously.



And finally, let's get behind our conference in Wellington this year. The organising committee are performing a sterling job on our behalf and have put together a programme of which we can be proud.

Pass on the word to your colleagues about the event, bring them along (!), and I look forward to seeing you all there. You can find out more at www.eianz.org

TIME TO THINK BIG, FOR THE ENVIRONMENT.

The following article was first published by the Christchurch Press on Wednesday July 14th, 2010. It is reproduced here with permission.

Is there too much, or too little concern about the environment, Ian Spellerberg wonders.

You would be forgiven for thinking that there is too much environmental concern. Hardly a day goes by without some mention of climate change or more recently there's been that media focus on the latest oil spill. In clean green New Zealand we can't seem to get away from environmental controversies such as irrigation schemes, offsetting carbon production, proposed mining in national parks, Hector's dolphins, and marine conservation areas. It's no surprise that Nanny also has something to say about environmental things. We are told what to do with our household rubbish and we are frowned upon if we mention plastic shopping bags. Of course we should have more confidence in all those accords that deal with everything from cows and waterways to packaging in the supermarket. Let's hope the Government's Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) will be worth waiting for!

If that is not enough, someone seems to have gone mad with environmental naming rights. Saturday June 5th was World Environment day and also Arbour Day. The U.N. designated 2010 as the year of Biodiversity and 2009 the year of planet Earth. The U.N. has designated 2005-2014 as the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development. There is no shortage of global assessments and environmental strategies ranging from the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment to the Global Plant Strategy. Ever heard of the Earth Charter?

All of this environmental concern is nothing new. The 1960s gave us plenty to think about and yes there were environmental leaders even then. A women journalist in the U.S. by the name of Rachel Carson published a book with the strange title of '*Silent Spring*'. This was all about her concerns that agricultural chemicals (such as DDT) were killing off the bird life (thus leading to a spring without bird song). Later, DDT was largely banned but interestingly enough there's now been a call by Henry Miller (a Fellow at Stanford University) to have DDT brought back to fight malaria.

Another plug for the environment was as long as 38 years ago. In 1972, Stockholm hosted the first

global environment meeting or Earth Summit. That prompted interdisciplinary environmental education and global environmental monitoring programmes. Earth Summits have continued every 10 years and perhaps the most remarkable in terms of outcomes was the Rio Summit in 1992. That had five products (1992 Convention of Biological Diversity, The Rio Declaration, Forest Principles, Agenda 21 and the Framework Convention on Climate Change). Will there be another Earth Summit in 2012?

So what are they trying to tell us? Don't worry about all this environment stuff because there's plenty being done to look after it. Each year, for the last 50 years, the total environmental effort (how ever you measure it) has increased. Even better, there have been environmental success stories and here in New Zealand there has been no shortage. New Zealand's mainland island nature conservation projects are, for example, the envy of the world. We have been a world leader when it comes to valuing our environment and designating protected areas such as national parks.

It's no surprise that environmental effort has increased and continues to do so.

The last 50 years have been littered with all kinds of long lasting nasty environmental tragedies. What happened after 'Bophal'? Many people have forgotten or have never heard of 'Chernobyl'. How long will the ecological effects of the latest oil spill last? The last 50 years have seen a growing number of environmental disasters and environmental greed. Overfishing continues, destruction of forests continues, the devastating effects of introduced plants and animals is huge, soil quality is being destroyed at rates greater than ever before, water is being exploited, pollution becomes a bigger problem every year, and overall ecosystems and species are in continuing decline. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment has the most comprehensive and compelling evidence to show that all is not well. The clear message is that the unsustainable use of nature and the environment is getting worse year by year.



Over the last 50 years environmental effort has increased, but at the same time the health of the environment has decreased. On one hand, management of nature has been supported with more resources, but at the same time nature is declining. What's the problem?

History is telling us that we haven't got it right and the predictions – predicated on strong science - are that continued environmental degradation and the unsustainable use of nature will have disastrous results. The implications would seem to be far greater than anything that climate change may have. Indeed, climate change is surely just part of a much greater environmental imperative.

So what's the explanation for declining environment despite the increase in effort? What else should or could we be doing? As many will know, current political systems, economic systems and taxation models do not work in favour of sustainable and equitable use of nature and the environment. There are other models but it will take some time before current practices change.

Is there something else? Are we *really* serious about environmental issues? Why so much air-time for sceptics with baseless opposition to reforms in environmental practice? Much of current environmental thinking seems to be about fixing dripping taps and recycling. That's diverting attention away from the much bigger issues. If we were really serious about the environment then we

would be changing the curriculum at all levels from pre-school to tertiary.

Perhaps we need to re-think what is core in the curriculum and perhaps consider that it may not be just writing, reading arithmetic and IT.

Perhaps there needs to be greater acknowledgement that there is an environment profession. A growing number of graduates are becoming environmental practitioners and that needs to be matched by professional development programmes. The old perception that environmentalists are extreme and not to be trusted is outdated. In Britain it is now possible for environmental practitioners to apply for Chartered Status. Here in New Zealand and Australia greater accountability amongst environmental practitioners is being made possible by environmental certification.

In New Zealand we tend to devote attention to environmental issues only if it is sensational, a disaster or has a human element. Is the risk really environmental saturation, scepticism, and boredom? Historically the newspapers have devoted disproportionate amounts of space to the business pages and dare I say it, sport. For the environment, the media could do much more.

Ian Spellerberg is a Fellow of the Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand.

ENGAGING COMMUNITIES IN WASTE MINIMISATION

Sarah Pritchett

The biggest difficulty I find in working in household waste minimisation is how to engage people. It seems to be easier to interest households in energy efficiency – after all everyone wants a warmer, drier home with lower power bills. The tangible benefits of waste minimisation are more difficult to sell and maybe even more so to fixed income households such as Council and Housing New Zealand tenants who sometimes have more pressing concerns than the amount of rubbish they produce each week.

I have been fortunate to receive a Winston Churchill Memorial Trust Fellowship to see if I can find out how organisations in the UK successfully engage the community in waste minimisation. I chose the UK as my focus because, as in New Zealand, waste minimisation is primarily a voluntary behaviour, with councils providing incentives and disincentives to reduce household (and commercial) waste. This is in contrast to nations such as Germany and some Scandinavian

countries where legislation is tighter. While in the UK I aim to visit eight organisations that work directly with households on waste minimisation or write policies and programmes for councils. I am also visiting the Eden Project and the Centre for Alternative Technology to see how they weave the waste message into their overall themes.

My first visit was to WRAP (Waste & Resources Action Programme) in Banbury, Oxfordshire. WRAP is funded by the English Government's Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), and the Scottish and Welsh Governments and was established in 2000 to promote markets for recycled materials. This aim has now been extended to include waste minimisation. To date its four main programmes have been on home composting, real (cloth) nappies, food waste, and packaging in the retail industry.

The home composting programme was established to address the problems many councils had



encountered when giving out compost bins. If councils told householders they could come and pick up a free bin they usually ended up with a warehouse full of unclaimed bins, and if councils distributed free bins the bins were often mis-used by householders who weren't interested in composting. The WRAP home composting programme was therefore set up on a professional, commercial model (without the intention of making a profit). Householders rang an 0800 number and were ordered a subsidised compost bin, which was then delivered to their door along with a users manual. After two years of selling the bins many queries started to come in about what to do with the compost so a team of advisers was established to help people with their compost queries. Over 3 years the programme sold 2,000,000 bins and it is estimated that for each bin sold 150kg of waste was diverted from landfill annually.

The WRAP Real Nappy campaign was not viewed as being such a success. This programme funded groups around the country and offered incentives such as money back vouchers when parents purchased cloth nappies (I think the Christchurch City Council trialled such a scheme). Unfortunately the programme was stopped after 3 years, just as cloth nappy manufacturers had begun to see a positive impact on sales. Philip Ward, one of WRAP's Directors, believes the campaign would have been more successful if it had continued on longer and if it had had a wider focus to help new parents who are bombarded with all sorts of "must haves" for their new baby. In addition, new "biodegradable" nappies came out on the market which made parents feel like they could have the convenience of disposable nappies without the guilt. However, as Philip points out, biodegradable nappies are just as bad as other disposables because if they go to landfill they can't biodegrade and a baby goes through too many to be able to home compost them. One successful aspect of this campaign was recommissioning a life cycle analysis of cloth versus disposable nappies. The first DEFRA-funded life cycle analysis concluded that there was not much difference. However, after it was re-calculated according to cloth nappy manufacturer's washing instructions it was concluded that cloth nappies have a lesser impact on the environment. The real nappy campaign in the UK is now headed by a group call Go Real, who have the wider remit of green parenting rather than just nappies.

WRAP's third programme was the Courtauld Commitment (CC), a voluntary agreement that initially signed up 12 of the major supermarkets to reduce packaging. The CC now has over 40

signatories and is working on issues such as reducing packaging through design (for example, the breweries have worked collectively to redesign the standard beer bottle to reduce glass used), and reducing food waste (including as part of the supply chain). Another initiative of the CC was regarding wine bottles. Most wine sold in UK supermarkets is imported (from New Zealand, Australia, South Africa, South America and Europe). The green glass used for wine bottles was piling up because there was no use for it here so now supermarket wine is imported in bulk and bottled in the UK using the recycled green glass. Other initiatives include designing re-sealable packaging for items such as cheese (to avoid hard ends being wasted), and including "how to store" information on fresh fruit and vegetables. For example, a plastic bag of apples might say "To keep me best at home store me in the fridge". Lately the CC has been addressing supply chain food waste. This is where a supermarket may order from a supplier X number of pre-packaged salads on a particular date. Then closer to the delivery day the supermarket may halve that number because weather has been cooler than expected and pre-packaged salads have not been selling as well as expected. Suppliers are often then left with vast quantities with nowhere to go (because of contractual agreements or because it is too short notice to get anyone else to buy it). To attempt to address this issue WRAP is working on a different risk spread formula, which will hopefully cut down on waste.

The fourth WRAP programme and probably the one that captured my attention the most is the Love Food Hate Waste campaign. This was launched in 2007 after a household survey and waste audit of over 2000 demographically diverse households in the UK. The data extrapolated from this survey estimates that UK households annually throw out 6.7 million tonnes of mostly edible food. At the same time a survey found that most people thought they didn't throw out much food waste. When I mention the aim of the Love Food Hate Waste campaign to people (both in the UK and in New Zealand) they say things along the lines of "Oh it's terrible isn't it how much food people [meaning other people not themselves] waste" or "Oh yes I think younger people waste so much more food than the older generation". But the surprising findings of the WRAP survey is that first of all people don't realize how much food they waste and secondly there is no difference between generational food wastage - the only group who wastes more food is single people (of any age) because, presumably, most food is not packaged for one person. The first phase of the campaign therefore was to make people aware of how much



food they throw out and how much money they could save if they didn't. The second part of the campaign, featuring a suite of 8 food "characters" (these are real people who bear a resemblance to say, a potato, or an apple etc – see them at <http://www.lovefoodhatewaste.com/>), helps people work out how to minimise the food they waste by providing tips on, for example, how to shop more "accurately" so food waste doesn't occur, what to do with leftover food, how to store food properly so it doesn't go off before being eaten, and what food

is suitable for freezing. About half of local authorities have picked up the Love Food Hate Waste campaign and they often put their own spin on it. For example, the Gloucestershire Council offers a free cookbook "Eat Well, Waste Less: An A-Z guide to using up leftovers".

In 2009 WRAP estimated that the £4.5m campaign has already saved British consumers £300m.

In following newsletters I will outline my visits to WasteWatch, FutureResources and Eunomia.

CONFERENCES AND TRAINING

Breakfast forum on business sustainability and leadership

16 September 2010

Christchurch

Check out the events sections of the NZ Chapter web section <http://www.eianz.org/aboutus/new-zealand>

EIANZ Annual Conference – From Discovery to Delivery

26-29 October 2010

Te Papa

Wellington

<http://www.confer.co.nz/eianz2010/>

New Zealand Plant Conservation Network Annual Conference

Plants in a human landscape – conservation outside nature reserves

7-10 October 2010

Christchurch

http://www.nzpcn.org.nz/page.asp?nzpcn_events_conference_2010

Lord Nicholas Stern lectures

8 September 2010 to 10 September 2010

Auckland University and Victoria University (video link)

Managing the risks of climate change, overcoming world poverty and creating a new era of growth and prosperity: The challenges for global collaboration and rationality.

http://www.auckland.ac.nz/ua/home/about/news-events-and-notice/events/template/event_item.jsp?cid=11237



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