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Submission to the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority on the Draft NZ Energy Efficiency and Conservation Strategy

Introduction

The National Council of Women of New Zealand (NCWNZ) is an umbrella organisation representing 42 Nationally Organised Societies and National Members. NCWNZ has 31 branches throughout the country attended by representatives of those societies as well as some 150 other societies. The Council's function is to work for the well-being of women, the family and the community at local, national and international levels through research, study, discussion and action. NCWNZ welcomes the opportunity to make this submission on behalf of our members.

This submission is written by the Environment Standing Committee based on input from 24 Branches of NCWNZ and NCWNZ policy. It has also been reviewed by a member of the NCWNZ Board.

NCWNZ has policy dating back to 1990 expressing its concern regarding the increase in climate change. Many submissions on this and related subjects have been made over the years. This present submission continues that long history of interest which NCWNZ members have taken in conservation matters.

Specific Comments

Do you have suggestions for prioritising actions (p.55, question 2)

A majority of members believed that all actions listed in the draft should be given urgent priority. Of the people responding, the majority believed that the first priority was an information campaign, so people can see how they fit into the solutions for achieving energy efficiency and conservation, particularly in New Zealand's context. The changes required of people must be achievable by the majority, particularly when time sensitive. Many people want to make a difference to the current situation, but require leadership and guidance. Some suggestions for disseminating information include:

Mailing an information package to every household in the country, as was done in Sweden.

Access the mass media with possibilities including the screening of "An Inconvenient Truth" on national television – at prime time on every channel, so people can readily understand the linkages between the need for energy efficiency and savings, and the impact the lack of these things is having on our environment currently and in the future.

Advertising breaks should include energy efficiency/conservation advertisements, whether that be incentives, ideas people could use for changing things in their homes or at work, and products that will help them achieve this.

Direct promotion of energy saving should follow the current consultation on the Draft Energy Efficiency and Conservation Strategy, to businesses as well as householders. This could include the promotion of positive examples, such as a business contributing to employees' costs for those who walk or cycle to work.





It is vital that the community is able to see rewards for being more conscientious with their energy savings. Obviously, money saved is one such incentive.

Another possible incentive could be similar to the systems used by credit cards, whereby a person earns points towards a reward. In this way, there could be an incentive system that rewards the consumer with materials which will increase their ability to conserve and enable them to participate more fully.

There would also be value in encouraging the various agencies that do offer such reward systems to include in their rewards systems materials that are more energy-efficient and eco-friendly.

Other suggestions put forward by the membership included:

- Introduce the Home Energy Rating Scheme (HERS) for rating houses.
- Producers of emissions must face the costs, so that they are encouraged to invest in alternative.
- Trading credits do not reduce emissions.
- Ethanol crops use land that may be in competition for food crops. However, this might be useful during the transition period. Hydrogen is not an energy source, but is a carrier. It requires more energy to make hydrogen than the hydrogen releases.
- Regulate the import of fuel inefficient vehicles and increase incentives for hybrid and electric vehicles.
- A majority response was that the Government must act as an example, such as that set by Department of Conservation, by moving into eco-efficient offices and using hybrid vehicles. All Government agencies and publicly funded bodies should be required to provide an energy/resource efficiency audit.

How can local government and non-government agencies work with central government to improve the uptake of energy efficiency and renewable energy (p.55, question 6)?

All respondents were positive that new building regulations on energy savings should be mandatory as soon as possible. Buildings should have at least solar hot water, improved insulation, be situated for passive heat from the sun, and preferably have double glazing.

One branch commented that the Government assisted solar heating units should be only for retrofitting to older houses.

It was generally accepted that all new houses should be required to have at least solar hot water units before obtaining a building permit.

All of the above has to be enforced by local bodies, and responses from some local bodies especially Auckland, were enthusiastic. Members and local governments can see advantages in co-operation.

Local government has been particularly active over the last few years in establishing regional environmental outcomes for example. However, the funding of local government is not sufficient to properly resource the Councils to invest in improving infrastructure for things such as public transport. Land Transport is also arguably resistant to releasing funding for public transport projects.

This problem is further exacerbated when Central government is seen as interfering with public transport plans, as was the case during the consultation last year on the Johnsonville train service in Wellington, when the Minister of Finance dismissed the consultation.

Local government needs to receive the financial backing from central government to work with an lead the community towards being more energy efficient and conservative. It needs to lead by example and it needs to promote local businesses, which are likewise leading by example. This type of promotion could be achieved via sponsorship of local community events.



Our society has been based on the creation of competition for economic growth. Local and central government needs to be inspired to create competition in businesses that can operate most energy efficiently. Such savings create greater income, which is essentially what economic growth is meant to achieve. Unfortunately the current model for economic growth is too energy and resource intensive, hence the requirement for change.

While the green ribbon awards are recognised as meritorious in some circles, they hardly rate against “Business of the Year” awards. This is something that needs to change – a business should only receive such an award and people should only be encouraged to purchase their services and goods if they can demonstrate they are operating and dependent on resources to a level that is sustainable.

To date businesses which have been labelled ‘green’ or ‘eco-friendly’ have been publicly stigmatised as ‘oddities’, particularly by those businesses seeking to operate in an intensive, economically-drive fashion. This viewpoint has to change. All businesses need to be sustainable, such as in energy consumption, and this condition has to become the societal ‘norm’. Endorsement of this by local and central government is critical if energy efficiency and conservation are to become part of the way ordinary New Zealanders live.

NGOs have a wealth of knowledge about energy conservation and many have good relationships with Councils. Consultation between the various parties is important; however finding the best means for achieving this can be problematic. For some Councils, public workshops work well, while in other areas people are more accessible via written consultation or web-based technology. Councils need to examine the methodologies they are using for accessing the community’s viewpoints.

For those Councils that don’t have established focus, or advisory groups made up of NGO members then they should build the necessary bridges to establish them. Such groups should not be made up from organisations that specialise in the conservation for example; rather they should be a mix of different disciplines. This way the Council will be able to access the specialist ideas and also assess whether the rest of the community is likely to buy into the ideas.

What role do you see for energy conserving behaviour to reduce energy use and carbon emission? Should such behaviour be encouraged all the time, or to reduce peak electricity demand, or if oil supplies are disrupted (p.55, question 9)?

All members thought that energy conserving behaviour must become a permanent habit, all the time, and that all sectors of New Zealand must be involved in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

It was also suggested that television spot advertising could be used to remind the public of their obligations.

Most responding branches saw rail and coastal shipping as a better means for transporting goods across the country than diesel trucks. Many drivers on motorways attached to metropolitan areas such as Auckland, Hamilton and Wellington describe trucks as ‘blight’. They offer a costly form of haulage over the long distance, and their real costs in respect of damage to the environment are not recognised in terms of their direct charges to the user. They are recognised to a limited extent however, in terms of their cost to the general public’s health and well-being via taxes paid for healthcare in New Zealand.

All members felt that voluntary measures have not been successful and regulations would be required.

As an incentive for energy conservation, it was suggested that consumers could be paid for any energy generated privately and returned to the national grid.

The health and wellbeing aspects of energy conservation could be stressed.



Are there any big opportunities that have been overlooked (p.55, question 13)?

Some models used overseas could be applicable to New Zealand's conditions. One member identified a system used in Wales, which offers a combination of hydro and wind energy generation. Reservoirs need to be installed at the top and bottom of a hill site, and linked to a wind farm. When the wind blows, surplus wind power pumps the water from the bottom to the top of the reservoir. If the wind stops, the water can be run back down through turbines to the bottom reservoir, creating electricity from water. This would be especially suitable for small or medium sized areas. New Zealand has the best country in the world for wind resource, and one of the best for hydro. All hydro lakes could be used as storage batteries if matched with wind farms. This overcomes the main problem with wind – that of its variability – without the difficulties of batteries.

The key message from this example is that we should be thinking about energy production more laterally, looking for models that can harness/create energy from multiple sources simultaneously.

There was a general feeling that air travel should have some restrictions. Currently the real environmental costs generated by air travel are not included in the price of a ticket. Other technologies have been developed, which could replace the need for people to travel from one cent4re to another to engage in a face-to-face meeting, e.g. video-conferencing, web-based conferencing. Improvements in public transport, such as our national rail service could make this means of transport more attractive, particularly if the polluter-pays principle was applied to air travel.

There could be further development of a national education programme on saving energy in both primary and secondary schools, as exists in some schools now. Added to this is the need for educating children about the costs of producing the many products they currently enjoy. Advertising on television has perpetuated the consumer-culture that is a strong feature in New Zealand society. While many young people are effective recyclers, they do not readily understand that they are large consumers.

Further to this, restricts on advertising and lighting are needed. By placing a ban on advertising between certain hours, and the reinstatement of advertising free days, increased energy consumption arising from consumerism and its linkage to economic growth, may be somewhat reduced. Members considered that this must change to “sustainable” advertising and a stable economy.

Members also felt that in some situations alternatives to private motor vehicles, such as walking school buses, the construction of cycle, skating (skateboards, rollerblades, non-motorised scooters) and walking tracks should be encourage, as well as increasing the access to and reliability of service of public transport.

All universally applauded the plans to go ahead with wave and tide generation, and further solar and wind research. Bio fuel has problems since it may take up food producing land and some bio fuels are as damaging to the environment as the fossil fuels we are seeking to replace.

Petrol rationing was thought to be a better option than a charge on petrol vehicles. Global and national economies have been transferring assets from poor to rich for many years, and a charge would impact on lower income families¹. This has helped to create the current situation.

Members queries why there was no mention of self-sufficiency for New Zealand. Many climate change writers (e.g George Monbiot, Richard Heinberg, and James Howard Kunstler) agree that smaller self-sufficient local communities are the best future option. New Zealand could be comfortably self sufficient in making bio fuel if we do not have to feed multitudes overseas, we could also become self sufficient in wind, wave, tide and solar energy resources, and in most industrial and commercial activity.

¹ Reference “Global Warming: No Easy Fix”. *Newsweek International* – March 12, 2007.



Conclusion

NCWNZ is heartened that the Government announced its commitment to addressing the impacts and causes of climate change in New Zealand. The NCWNZ membership is likewise committed to playing an active role in finding solutions, hence the adoption of sustainable development as a target focus in September 2006.

NCWNZ encourages the Government to take leadership on this issue and to utilise all available expertise and resources to ensure that meaningful and effective targets are set within any action plan developed. It is critical that democratic processes, such as consultations or even the establishment of expert bodies, such as a taskforce, remain a feature of the solution-setting.

Should the Government undertake to launch an information campaign, NCWNZ recommends that all media forms are utilised, particularly those that reach a mass audience. The airing of climate change documentaries, and other media input, such as interviews with politicians and scientists on radio and in written media, will help the public to establish what they can do towards resolving this situation. Public support will naturally make the Government's efforts much more effective in achieving a real reduction in greenhouse gases.

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