

# INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW ZEALAND WASTE STRATEGY

Strategic planning is a tool used to help organisations of all sizes assess the current environment, envision the future and develop objectives for influencing the future and achieving the organisations mission.

Strategy should describe a longer term vision or goal (what does winning mean for us?), and an overview of how the organisation plans to achieve this goal (how will we win?).

The challenge of creating good strategy is that it should guide and inspire action, without dictating or limiting what should be done, by who and when.

Good strategy should make it easier for groups to create their own more detailed operational plans, confident in the knowledge that other groups will be headed in same

direction, and which part of the overall mission they are involved in.

In New Zealand we have a number of strategic planning documents that have been developed by the New Zealand government (in particular, the Ministry for the Environment) that as a waste minimisation practitioner it can be useful to understand. In plain terms, it is mainly important because it gives you an idea of what the government is thinking about and what direction they want to go in.

This document will give you a brief introduction to the main strategic documents of the New Zealand government since 2002, which should give you a sense of the themes and current direction.



This resource sheet was developed by CRN Aotearoa with support from Auckland Councils Waste Minimisation and Innovation Funding  
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## THE 2002 NEW ZEALAND WASTE STRATEGY

The New Zealand Waste Strategy: 'Towards zero waste and a sustainable New Zealand' was published in 2002 as the guiding vision for waste management and waste minimisation in New Zealand.

The Strategy covered solid, liquid and gaseous wastes and included the life cycle of waste, from generation to disposal. "Any material, solid, liquid or gas, that is unwanted and / or unvalued, and discarded or discharged by its owner. This definition recognised that what one person or organisation regards as a waste can be a useful resource when used again for a beneficial purpose".

It promoted resource efficiency at every stage of production and consumption, and the focus was on waste prevention rather than on waste disposal. In particular, it supported the 'waste hierarchy' – reduction, reuse, recycling, recovery, treatment and disposal.

At the time, it filled a gap in the legislative framework for managing and minimising waste by setting targets to move New Zealand towards 'zero waste'. The process started with the release of a discussion document, 'Towards a National Waste Minimisation Strategy' which drew submissions from a wide range of public and private sector groups and individuals – many calling for the introduction of a zero waste target. The Working Group and public submissions called for clear national leadership and recognition of the crucial role regional and local government play in addressing New Zealand's waste problem.

The New Zealand Waste Strategy was the Government's primary policy on waste. It was not until six years later (2008) that the Waste Minimisation Act would be established to provide the necessary legislation to allow the Ministry for the Environment (MfE) to take a more aggressive approach to minimising waste. The Ministry developed the strategy for the Environment in partnership with Local Government New Zealand. It had a vision statement 'towards zero waste and a sustainable New Zealand'.

The 2002 Waste Strategy had three goals:

- Social: lower the costs and risks of waste to society
- Environmental: reduce environmental damage from the generation and disposal of waste
- Economic: increase economic benefit by using material resources efficiently.

Cutting down on the amount of waste we generate and discard was the long-term challenge this strategy is designed to meet. However, since it was a strategy, none of it was compulsory and there were no mechanisms to enforce change.



## TARGETS IN THE NEW ZEALAND WASTE STRATEGY: 2006 REVIEW OF PROGRESS

Between 2002 and 2010 there were a number of changes within the resource recovery sector. However, four years later, MfE released another report titled, Targets in the New Zealand Waste Strategy: 2006 Review of progress. This document reported on progress against the strategy's 30 targets for improved waste management, waste minimisation and resource efficiency.

This report indicated that existing monitoring and reporting systems for waste were insufficient. The 2006 review found that lack of information was hampering our ability to set and achieve targets for waste minimisation. If we were going to better manage and minimise waste, we needed to be able to measure, monitor and report waste flows accurately. The lack of accurate waste data has been a long-term problem in New Zealand.

This was highlighted by a 2007 report by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Environmental Performance Review of New Zealand (OECD, 2007) found that household waste sent to landfills roughly tracked gross domestic product (GDP) between 1990 and 1999. The review saw little sign that waste will not track GDP in the future.

Initially the Strategy set what it called 'challenging but achievable' national targets for organic wastes, special wastes, hazardous wastes and waste disposal. The review noted that good progress had been made in the journey towards zero waste. However, despite the successes, waste minimisation and waste management practices were still widely variable and the challenge was to ensure consistency throughout New Zealand. Progress was also needed to increase the range and quality of materials diverted from landfill and to promote onshore recovery and processing of recycled materials.

The review also showed a need for increased effort to better understand and manage organic wastes and the construction and the demolition waste stream. These two streams of waste represented almost half of the waste going to landfill.

Other key points from the 2006 review:

- From 1995 to 2006 there was no significant reduction in waste to landfill - however the economy and population both grew in this period.
- Recycling became easier for the householder, with 97% of New Zealanders having access to domestic recycling facilities - 73% of them at the kerbside.

### WASTE DISPOSAL LEVY AND WASTE MINIMISATION FUND

From 1 July 2009, the Waste Minimisation Act introduced a waste disposal levy of \$10 per tonne (plus GST) on all waste disposed of at landfills. The purpose of this levy is to raise revenue to promote and achieve waste minimisation and recognise the cost of waste disposal on the environment, society and the economy by increasing the cost of waste disposal.

The Minister for the Environment is required to review the effectiveness of the waste disposal levy at least every three years. The first review of the waste levy was undertaken in 2011. At this time the levy had only been in place for two years so only limited conclusions could be drawn about its effectiveness.

In 2014, the review focused on whether the levy was being applied fairly and correctly, and how to ensure a level playing field for those paying the levy. Another priority was to assess the impacts that levy funding was having. At the current rate of \$10 per tonne (plus GST) the levy generates about \$25 million each year. The review made 11 recommendations to:

- Improve the quality and quantity of waste data
- Ensure the levy is applied consistently by disposal facility operators
- Improve the coverage of the levy
- Better measure and evaluate the outcomes of levy funding
- Ensure funding is available for New Zealand's strategic waste priorities
- Improve our understanding of the incentives for waste minimisation
- Promote user-pays pricing systems for waste disposal.

## THE 2010 NEW ZEALAND WASTE STRATEGY

In 2010, the Ministry for the Environment launched their third document relating to the New Zealand Waste Strategy. While the 'zero waste' vision of the 2002 Strategy was ambitious, according to the 2006 review, many of its targets were unable to be measured or achieved.

The revised 2010 Strategy dropped the words zero waste, which signalled to many stakeholders that the new strategy would be a watered down version of the original document. MfE wanted to allow for a less aggressive and more flexible approach to waste management and minimisation.

The 2010 New Zealand Waste Strategy outlines the Government's high-level strategic direction for waste management and minimisation. The new strategy now had two goals. These were to:

- Reduce the harmful effects of waste
- Improve the efficiency of resource use

The strategy's two goals were to provide direction to central and local government, businesses (including the waste industry) and communities on where to focus their efforts to manage waste.

According to MfE, this strategy is more flexible and can be adapted to different situations. The flexible approach was to allow waste management and minimisation activities to be adapted to local situations. Many stakeholders saw this as a reduced focus on waste minimisation, that it was "slipping off the radar" in Wellington.

### Relationship to the Waste Minimisation Act 2008

The introduction of the Waste minimisation act 2008 has significantly enhanced the regulatory framework for efficient resource use. For example, the introduction of the waste disposal levy has contributed to an increase in the cost of waste disposal, which may encourage more recycling and other waste minimisation activities.

The lack of data about waste continues to be a problem and hampers MfE and local government's ability to plan appropriate activities to improve waste management and minimisation.

The New Zealand Waste Strategy provides high-level direction to guide the use of the tools available to manage and minimise waste in New Zealand. The purpose of the Waste Minimisation Act 2008 (the act) is to encourage waste minimisation and a decrease in waste disposal to protect the environment from harm and provide environmental, social, economic and cultural benefits.



## The New Zealand Waste Strategy

REDUCING HARM, IMPROVING EFFICIENCY



New Zealand Government

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