

Zero Waste: Opportunities & challenges for positive, future-focused action



A briefing for Local Government candidates

Tēnā koe,

Thanks for taking on the challenge of becoming an effective local body politician.

Recycling, waste and plastic pollution issues are top of mind for ratepayers and communities. As local councils are responsible for minimising and managing waste, voters will be looking for leadership from their elected members.

Having a clear list of priority actions to reduce waste and improve resource recovery systems will be gold both during the election campaign, and once you are elected!

Implementing these circular economy actions will build your district's resilience, reduce waste, reduce climate emissions and create jobs.

Priority Actions



1. Link waste reduction to climate emissions

Councils are working on climate change and waste reduction, but often the plans do not factor in that reducing waste also helps to reduce emissions. All our food and products contain embodied energy and materials that have been extracted from the natural world. Councils need to apply the zero waste principles in the waste hierarchy to keep products and materials in circulation for as long as possible. That's good for nature and our climate.

Reducing waste helps reduce emissions and shifts us towards a circular economy.

Ask questions: Ask how your Council's Waste Minimisation and Climate Action Plans link waste reduction to climate emissions.

[Watch video here](#)



2. Bring community resource recovery to your district

Community resource recovery centres offer a wide range of reuse, repair, recycling, composting and product take back services, enabling the community to participate in the circular economy. Staff can offer waste minimisation advice to households, business and community organisations. Some councils are already working on turning their transfer stations into community resource recovery centres, which will set them up with ideal drop off points when the container return scheme is launched. A partnership between council and the local not-for-profit zero waste organisation locks in broader outcomes and jobs.

Get help - Contact Sue Coutts from ZWN or Matthew Luxon from Localised to find out how the Zero Waste Network can support you to open a community resource recovery centre in your district, or put you in touch with your local one.

[Watch video here](#)



3. Improve quality and transparency of recycling & composting systems

Quality and transparency are critical in achieving the high-functioning recycling and composting systems which will support a circular economy. Currently collection and processing systems vary hugely between districts. Public transparency is limited, with almost no reporting on final outcomes.

To be effective, council's kerbside recycling and kerbside composting systems need to collect and process materials in a way that preserves their value and minimises contamination. This produces high quality outputs, meaning recycling can become recycled content in new products, and compost can be added to soil to support local food resilience. If these final outputs are not achieved, then ratepayer money is being wasted.

Ask questions: Ask for transparency and statistics on the final outcomes of kerbside recycling and kerbside composting in your district

Helpful link: [What real recycling is all about](#)

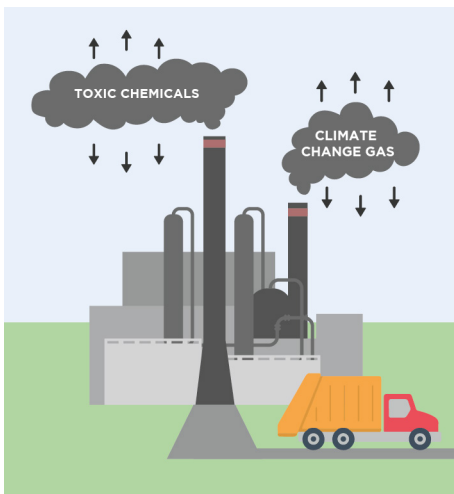


4. Invest in zero waste education & community engagement

Council's responsibilities to minimise waste go much further than just paying to take waste and recycling away. Many councils use their allocated Waste Minimisation Funds to support community-led zero waste education and engagement, and this allocation will increase over the next few years as the waste levy rises. This funding is a perfect opportunity to channel resources to local community-led organisations (such as community resource recovery centres) who integrate zero waste behaviour change with practical action. Bringing big global issues down to a local scale gives people something practical they can do to solve the waste and climate crisis, encouraging behavioural shifts and positive change.

Ask questions: Ask where your council's Waste Minimisation Funds are being spent, and support partnerships with community-led organisations who specialise in zero waste education and engagement.

[Watch video here](#)



5. Reject any Waste to Energy Incineration proposals

Waste to energy incineration (burning mixed municipal rubbish) takes us in the wrong direction and is a form of rubbish disposal, just like landfill. Incinerators generate carbon emissions and release toxic substances like 'forever chemicals' which can contaminate air, land and water. Long-term supply contracts are needed to make these plants viable which locks communities into unsustainable pathways. Currently Aotearoa New Zealand has no waste to energy incineration, but smaller councils are being targeted by proposals which would lead to them becoming "rubbish towns", leading to robust community opposition.

[Watch video here](#)



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