



Minister congratulates eco-labelling programme



Speaking at the Govt3 Awards, the annual environmental recognition for government agencies held in October, Hon David Benson-Pope congratulated the general manager of the NZ Ecolabelling Trust, Robin Taylor, for the programme's growth. The Minister also reinforced the lead role that must be played by government in environmentally responsible practices and purchases.

Mr Benson-Pope congratulated Environmental Choice on its inventive use of e-book technology at the awards, to provide a paperless, interactive display on products of our certified companies. The unit, designed and made by Auckland company The Graphic Café, was set up in Parliament Buildings and enabled government executives, and the Minister, to flip through eco-labelled products and view the commercial for Environmental Choice, at the time screening with the film *An Inconvenient Truth*.

Robin Taylor says Ministerial recognition of the growth of Environmental Choice is a further strengthening of government support for the eco-labelling programme. "The Ministry for the Environment sustainability team has also enthusiastically promoted the label, and its benefits to licensees will be augmented by their future support. The expectation for sustainable practices stated so clearly by the Minister will be welcomed by the major companies that have fronted up, as leaders of their industries, for the rigorous testing required to gain the Environmental Choice certification."

International AGM elects Canadian Chair and NZ Deputy



The end of the term for Dr Ning Yu as head of the Global Ecolabelling Network (GEN) has given New Zealand an opportunity for greater international profile within the organisation. At the annual general meeting in Seoul on 20 October, Canadian John Polack (far left) was elected chair, with Environmental Choice New Zealand general manager Robin Taylor (left) being elected deputy chair.

Robin's first international board meeting in his new role will be in Vancouver next April.

John Polak helped found GEN in 1994. He is a professional engineer with over 30 years' experience in the environmental sector. He has worked on issues related to transportation, air pollution and energy for Environment Canada, and represented Canada in organizations such as OECD, UNEP, UNCTAD, ECE and ISO. In July 1995 he created TerraChoice Environmental Marketing Inc. and is currently its chairman.

Environmental Choice automatically puts buildings ahead

The rigorous standards set by the label have propelled its licensees to the head of the check-list when it comes to the classification of environmentally-friendly buildings. As the NZ Green Building Council works towards a single rating tool for the "green" score of NZ buildings, it will give immediate points to products with the EC mark, says Council CEO, Jane Hensley.

"We will directly refer to Environmental Choice in some sections of the rating tools; if a product has been certified it will automatically gain maximum points. We see a lot of value in a Government-owned, third party eco label with robust certification processes, so we do not have to assess everything ourselves.

Government purchasing pressed to account

Manager of the Sustainable Industry Group in the Ministry for the Environment, Steve Dixon, addressed a meeting of stakeholders earlier this year, with the positive message that government agencies are now taking firmer action to favour Environmental Choice licensees in their purchasing. This has grown through the work of the ministry's Govt3 team, he said.

"The momentum of Govt3 has accelerated over the last 6 months. A much larger number of agencies are implementing initiatives, and we have moved from the awareness phase of Govt3 more into an engagement and action phase. We are really starting to get traction, especially in the area of Govt3 buildings," said Steve Dixon.

Mr Dixon was more specific about forthcoming procurement moves, and offered to provide to license holders, on request, details of the government agencies involved in procurement. "There are a number of Govt3 agencies who have purchased, or intend to purchase Environmental

Choice products. These include the Ministry for the Environment, NZFD, DBH, DoC, MoF, HNZA and others. Two exciting developments have been the inclusion of preferred Environmental Choice products wording in procurement policies and contracts, and we are now seeing the same in the RFP's for new building projects."



Steve Dixon greets John Polak with a hongi at last year's Procurement Conference in Wellington.



Label gains greater recognition

The umbrella of Environmental Choice New Zealand now covers over 700 products, proven to be environmentally preferable. As such, they attract Ministry support in Government procurement situations.

The number of companies qualifying, or in the process of qualifying, for certification in the last year has more than doubled – at this stage the increase is 120%. Robin Taylor says this "critical mass" marks a new level of visibility for the government-owned label. "It is increasingly easier to find properly assessed, environmentally preferable products in a wide range of categories now," says Robin Taylor. "All people have to do is look for the black and green Environmental Choice tick."

Looking further afield, the Trust has also taken major steps to facilitate the entry of New Zealand eco-labelled goods into overseas markets where premiums are often paid for products which are certified as environmentally preferable. This has been achieved by a growing number of mutual recognition agreements (MRAs), the latest of which is with the Czech Republic.

A moving picture



For the first time, the label has undertaken targeted, consumer "brand awareness" promotion, with a screen commercial at Auckland showings of the Al Gore environmental film An Inconvenient Truth. Over the 10 weeks of the campaign, 10,084 eco-conscious cinema-goers were exposed to the commercial. This was supported by cinema foyer display material, put in place over a month prior to the movie's September 14 opening.

The bold, simple message, delivered immediately the lights went down, was to always look for the Environmental Choice green-and-black tick when purchasing for work or home, as "in a clutter of claims, only one government-backed symbol proves products independently tested as environmentally preferable." Audience numbers were monitored, and the campaign was pulled once attendance began to diminish in order to best use promotional funds. "Your Campaign 'NZ Ecolabelling Trust' was very successful," commented Val Morgan screen advertising executive Suzanne Conradi. The Trust is looking at further suitable movie associations next year.

Many licensees have compelling and creative statements about their commitment to a better environment. Our most recent licensee, Interface Carpets, has been driven by a very engaging founder and international chairman, Ray Anderson, who says he had an environmental epiphany 12 years ago. “The vision is not just to change our company and eliminate our environmental footprint, but through the power of our influence on others to become restorative,” he says. “In nine years, at the end of 2003, we had progressed about one-third of the way from where we started in 1994, toward our goal of zero footprint, what we call the top of Mount Sustainability.

“To name a few relevant metrics, carbon intensity is down one-third, greenhouse gases are down 46%, we’ve reduced the number of smokestacks by 33%, the number of effluent pipes reduced by 47%, and water usage is down 78% per yard of carpet tile and 40% per yard of broadloom. This reduced footprint is embodied in every product we produce. As we perform life cycle assessments on our products, we are moving toward evaluating our manufacturing facilities on the basis of the cumulative impact of all the products a facility produces; and we are doing this worldwide.” In New Zealand, Robb Donzé is managing director.

Steve Aschebrock, who is director of sales and marketing says: “Within the local New Zealand environment, InterfaceNZ provides sustainable design-led flooring to the building industry by working directly with the Architectural & Design communities. We provide performance-based product that compliments any design format while ensuring that sustainability is at the core of the design.”

An example, he says, is the Cool Carpet range. “Here we provide certification based on the Climate Neutral Networks criteria that the product will be carbon neutral, based on the lifecycle of the product. Apart from making the Cool Carpet tile as sustainable as possible in the first instance, emission carbon credits are purchased to cover not only the emissions that occur within manufacture, but also the production of the raw materials such as nylon, transportation of raw materials and finished product, vacuuming and maintenance and recovery at the end of life.

“With our Mission Zero vision, we will by 2020 leave a zero footprint on our wonderful planet. The Environmental Choice accreditation that we enjoy further substantiates our commitment to New Zealand and the greater world around us.”

Laminex “Greenfirst” launch features Environmental Choice

The Laminex Group is a division of Fletcher Building Products Ltd, and it launched its “Greenfirst” range on 26 September at Auckland Museum and at other venues around the country. Greenfirst is a response by the company to the growing awareness of the impact of building materials on the environment, says spokesman Jared Dineen (pictured, lower right, at the launch function).

“Changing environmental demands and a growing awareness of ecologically sustainable development (ESD), primarily from architects and specifiers, is driving demand for environmentally preferable products and information. This creates a need for environmentally preferable laminates and building materials, and consumers are driving this through into office and general furniture fit-outs.”

All Greenfirst products have been awarded the Environmental Choice New Zealand licence. They include Melteca on Particleboard, Laminex Low Pressure Laminate on Particleboard, Trade Essentials Whiteboard on Particleboard, and Laminex and Formica High Pressure Laminates.



Painting the Town Greener

Resene is painting the town greener with the extension of the Resene PaintWise paint and paint packaging recovery program, the first comprehensive New Zealand product stewardship program for home decorators.

Following nearly five years of development, Be PaintWise was launched in 2004 by Resene to encourage paint users to minimise the effects of their decorating on the environment. Following a successful trial, a permanent Resene PaintWise service was launched in Auckland, Waikato and the Bay of Plenty in September 2005 providing 10 designated PaintWise Collection centres.



In mid July 2006, the service extended further to include five additional Resene ColorShops in Auckland and one in Hamilton. The Resene PaintWise Collection service has also become available to most South Island residents in August 2006 with the assistance of local South Island councils. Residents in all these areas can bring in unwanted paint and paint packaging, any brand, to one of the Resene ColorShops designated PaintWise Collection centres.

A PaintWise mobile truck service visits the stores, processing the materials received before returning to its depot. Good quality Resene paint is provided free to community groups, waterborne paint is used for other applications such as covering graffiti, solvent-borne paint goes through a solvent recovery program and metal packaging is recycled.

The Resene PaintWise service is being funded by Resene with implementation assistance from councils in each area it operates, the Ministry for the Environment and has been developed with 3R (Responsible Resource Recovery).

The ongoing programme will be managed by the Resene Foundation charitable trust. The Resene Foundation is a non-profit foundation with the initial role of facilitating the PaintWise program and distributing any surplus resources to charitable purposes.

Resene's managing director, Nick Nightingale, says the PaintWise idea was conceived in 1999 and is an extension of the company's commitment to the development of environmentally friendlier products and practices.

"Fifty years ago, Resene turned the paint industry on its head with the development of New Zealand's first waterborne paint. Since then we've achieved a milestone of 10 years of Environmental Choice certification and developed a highly successful environmental choice product range, but we never intended to stop there and PaintWise is testament to that," he says.



Resene has already shown great initiative in its promotion of the Environmental Choice label on the luggage carousel at Wellington airport.

Life Cycle Assessment

Strategic management decisions in the building industry are now being influenced along environmental lines by quantitative scientific reasoning known as environmental Life Cycle Assessment (LCA). This powerful tool has immediate value in supporting, implementing and evaluating the strategy process for sustainable development. It provides a rigorous scientific tool to complement “Green Building” initiatives such as the rating schemes of the NZ Green Building Council (NZGBC) and the Govt3 procurement guidelines.

Established in 2005, the NZGBC is now moving into an action phase. CEO Jane Henley says that New Zealand should adapt the Australian Green Building Council’s “Green Star” rating scheme for buildings, modified and evolved for the New Zealand market. Following industry consultations, the NZGBC has identified two main demands. One is for a rating scheme that is transportable across the Tasman. The other is for a rating scheme that is performance based. “People want to be able to measure a building’s performance as well as know its design meets criteria, based on a credible system,” says Henley.

MfE have demonstrated that sustainable buildings do not automatically require a large financial premium upfront. They have also shown that payback can be rapid. MfE senior advisor for sustainable government buildings Chris Wood says he’s been “absolutely amazed” at how quickly government agencies have got on track with the scheme. “Many manufacturers are now asking MfE how they can best comply with the direction and aims of the Govt3 programme,” he says.

The NZGBC ran LCA workshops in three main centres earlier this year.

Business council rallies behind Queen

The Queen’s Speech announcing the British Government will legislate to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 60% sends another strong signal to New Zealand that sustainable development policies will be needed here if the country is to remain globally competitive, says The New Zealand Business Council for Sustainable Development.

Britain’s proposed Climate Change Bill, announced in the Queens Speech in November will legislate to cut emissions by 60% by 2050. That increases the pressure on this country to do its share to help avoid the potential chaos threatened by climate change, says the Council.

The Business Council – whose 50 member companies’ \$40 billion in annual sales equate to about 30% of gross domestic product - has put a package of measures to Ministers and political party leaders aimed at “mainstreaming” sustainability.

Musings from The Recycle Bin

Thinkpad

In the last two years, IBM has gathered 248 “thought leaders” for “deep dive sessions” on the world’s pressing issues. Among their conclusions:

- one metric ton of electronic scrap from personal computers contains more gold than 17 tons of gold ore
- the amount of aluminium in North America's landfills outweighs the amount of ore left in the earth
- the average American steelmaker uses 20 tons of water to make one ton of steel
- Korean steel companies use just three to four tons of water to make one ton of steel

Scrap copper is gold dust in China

The Chinese economy was responsible for 69% of total world copper consumption in 2003 and recycling is high on the agenda.

Using their hands or some rudimentary machines, workers cut the plastic coating off the wires and pull out the copper. Copper hit a record US\$10,700 per ton in mid-May, more than double last year's price, and it is expected to stay high despite fluctuations.

One workshop in Qingyuan's Shijiao Township in the centre of South China's Guangdong Province turned out 100 tons of scrap copper last year, produced from recycled wires, cables, engines and other items. It is just one of 1,300 workshops in 22 villages in the surrounding area, which employ more than 100,000 labourers. The area generates nearly a million tons of copper, aluminium, iron, steel and plastics from recycling each year. Since its beginnings in the early 1980s, Qingyuan's copper recycling industry has grown to be worth more than US\$1.85 billion a year. It has helped boost the per capita income of farmers from below US\$123 in 1982 to US\$530 in 2003.

Fuelling the strong demand for copper in China are industries including energy, autos and construction. Recycling copper is 50 per cent cheaper than extracting copper from ore. Statistics indicate production of one ton of recycled copper involves at least 120 tons less industrial waste, two tons less sulphur dioxide and 600 tons less water than production of copper from ore.

Californians now recycle half of their trash

A 16-year state campaign to divert more waste from dumps has hit its goal, and as a result no new landfills have opened in a decade. The LA Times reports that state officials have announced that California has finally achieved its goal of reducing landfill waste by 50%, thanks to recycling by residents and businesses. The milestone culminates a campaign to persuade people to separate recyclables out of their rubbish.

Water way to go!

The global consumption of bottled water reached 154 billion liters in 2004, up 57 percent from the 98 billion litres consumed five years earlier. Even in areas where tap water is safe to drink, demand for bottled water is increasing-producing unnecessary waste and consuming vast quantities of energy. In the industrial world, bottled water is often no healthier than tap water, but it can cost up to 10,000 times more.

The United States is the world's leading consumer of bottled water, with Americans drinking 26 billion litres in 2004. In contrast to tap water, which is distributed through an energy-efficient infrastructure, transporting bottled water long distances involves burning massive quantities of fossil fuels. Nearly a quarter of all bottled water crosses national borders to reach consumers, transported by boat, train, and truck.

Fossil fuels are also used in the packaging of water. The most commonly used plastic for making water bottles is polyethylene terephthalate (PET), which is derived from crude oil. Making bottles to meet Americans' demand for bottled water alone requires more than 1.5 million barrels of oil annually. Worldwide, some 2.7 million tons of plastic are used to bottle water each year.

After the water has been consumed, the plastic bottle must be disposed of. According to the U.S. Container Recycling Institute, 86 percent of plastic water bottles used in the United States become garbage or litter. Incinerating used bottles produces toxic by-products such as chlorine gas and ash containing heavy metals. Buried water bottles can take up to 1,000 years to biodegrade. Almost 40 percent of the PET bottles that were deposited for recycling in the United States in 2004 were actually exported, sometimes to as far away as China-adding to the resources used by this product.

So, next time the waiter asks if you would like imported bottled water, or good Kiwi water (tap or bottled) you might like to think twice. Cheers!