



Media Release

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It's the climate for the sustainability professional

A ground-breaking report launched today in collaboration with Oxygen Consulting, the Sustainable Business Network (SBN), the Sustainable Business Council (SBC) and Auckland University of Technology (AUT), provides in-depth insights into the rapidly evolving roles of sustainability professionals within New Zealand organisations.

Sarah Holden, Director of Oxygen Consulting, says, "we undertook this research to help grow and support the sustainability profession, from the pathway to employment, to the skills and competencies organisations are now looking for within the profession."

Over the last twenty years, sustainability has moved from a grass roots movement to organisations having a fiscal responsibility for it. This means there is a growing number of dedicated sustainability roles, as well as more students seeking out these roles, and learning institutes increasingly integrating sustainability into academic pathways.

"It's great to see sustainability formally recognised as a profession of choice," says Rachel Brown, CEO of SBN. "We know millennials are desperately keen to be a part of a more regenerative future - and this report shows them how. Sustainability is more relevant than ever before, within every sector of the economy. Now is the time to build resiliency to ensure New Zealand businesses can weather future shocks. Many of these future shocks will be climate related."

SBC's Executive Director Mike Burrell agrees, "although this research took place prior to the Covid-19 crisis, it's become even more relevant as we work together towards investing in a sustainable recovery. The results show that climate change is by far the highest sustainability priority for most organisations. We need to ensure that much of the Covid-19 recovery package is invested in future-focused projects that will accelerate the pathway towards our zero-carbon targets. This report will help inform our collective work."

The research, which surveyed 130 New Zealand sustainability professionals, was undertaken during February and March 2020. 'Sustainability' includes responsibilities that address the social, environmental and economic risks to the organisation. Participants included those in full-time, part-time, or contractual positions within public, private and not for profit sectors. It was conducted in accordance with AUT's Ethics Committee processes (AUTEK Reference number 20/35).

"Working together with Oxygen Consulting, SBN and SBC is a great opportunity for AUT to support organisations that put sustainability at the heart of their business. This report very effectively combines practical expertise and research expertise. These findings are important in shaping AUT's current and future sustainability learning and teaching," says Marjo Lips-Wiersma, AUT's Professor of Ethics and Sustainability Leadership.

Ms Holden says the one of survey respondents sums up really well just how vital sustainability is moving forward, "The world will experience unprecedented change in the next 30 years. Our approach to sustainability now is only the start of the journey... it is not job done, it is job started."

You can read the full report [here](#).

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About the organisations:

Oxygen Consulting provides organisations with technical advice and guidance on sustainability practices, assisting clients to maximise their long-term business performance by strengthening social, environmental, and economic outcomes. Oxygen Consulting is a member of the Sustainable Business Council, the Sustainable Business Network, and the Climate Leaders Coalition. www.oxygen-consulting.co.nz/

Auckland University of Technology's sustainability team researches at the intersection of sentiment, resilience and sustainability action and works with business and NGOs to better understand employee engagement in sustainability. Its student research also gives it a strong voice on youth engagement in sustainability. AUT scored high in the Times Social Impact awards and sustainability teaching is integrated throughout all degrees in the Business School. AUT currently runs seven sustainability courses at both undergraduate and post-graduate level. www.aut.ac.nz

The Sustainable Business Council is a membership organisation, with a long-term aim to make sustainability mainstream within New Zealand businesses. SBC is part of the BusinessNZ network and is the New Zealand Global Network partner to the World Business Council for Sustainable Development. Membership now comprises more than 100 companies representing over 30% of GDP. www.sbc.org.nz

The Sustainable Business Network (SBN) is the largest sustainable business organisation in New Zealand. Its purpose is to empower business so people and nature prosper. SBN provides practical advice, tools and training, and collaborates on system change projects. www.sustainable.org.nz

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