



MEDIA STATEMENT

For release 9am, Thursday 15 April 2021

Kiwi businesses accelerate sustainability despite Covid-19

Oxygen Consulting in collaboration with the Sustainable Business Council (SBC), Sustainable Business Network (SBN) and Auckland University of Technology (AUT) have launched their 2021 Insights on New Zealand's Sustainability Professionals.

Despite the huge impact of Covid-19 over the past year on jobs within many industries, overall the sustainability profession continues to grow.

Five key insights from the second survey support this finding:

1. Many organisations have strengthened their investment in sustainability despite Covid-19;
2. Almost all industry sectors in New Zealand are employing sustainability professionals;
3. Sustainability drives organisational purpose, and addressing climate change is the top priority;
4. Those working as sustainability professionals feel more empowered, are experiencing better work-life balance and greater job satisfaction; and
5. Sustainability professionals are change agents and people skills are critical to development in the role.

Director of Oxygen Consulting Sarah Holden says that Covid has been somewhat of an accelerator for sustainability as more and more businesses strengthened investments and advanced their sustainability objectives.

"We can see that the sustainability profession is strengthening, and organisations are continuing to drive genuine sustainability action, despite the potential economic challenges presented in the Covid-19 recovery.

"Our sustainability professionals' strength is in their core skills – leadership, communication, problem solving, relationships and influencing – are key to being an effective organisational change agent in an adaptable world."

Sustainable Business Council Executive Director Mike Burrell says every part of New Zealand's economy is now helping cut emissions and transition to a low carbon future.

“The research shows business ambition and commitment to sustainability continues to grow, and we see this reflected in businesses that have maintained sustainability roles and strategies, despite the events of 2020.

“New Zealand has just become the first country in the world to introduce a law that requires the financial sector to disclose the impacts of climate change on their business and explain how they will manage climate-related risks and opportunities. There is a growing commitment across all sectors to work together towards investing in a sustainable recovery and supporting our sustainability professionals is an important part of that work.”

Sustainable Business Network Chief Executive Rachel Brown says when Covid hit, it was not initially clear what impact it would have on sustainability within businesses or on the profession.

“Despite a turbulent year, or perhaps as a result of a turbulent year and heightened awareness of issues around health or people and our planet, businesses recognise they need to take sustainability seriously. That has come through loud and clear in this research. Sustainability is now well and truly entrenched in the way we do business in Aotearoa.”

Auckland University of Technology Professor of Ethics and Sustainability Leadership Marjo Lips-Wiersma continues to see a growing interest in the profession as more people return to studies post lockdown.

“Our sustainability programme continues to grow, and students have experienced continuous opportunities for employment despite Covid. The sustainability role is professionalising, and up to date technical, self-management and change management skills are increasingly required to meet complex challenges.”

“We saw thousands of young people join the School Strike for Climate, reminding us this is a generation focused on a sustainable future. These keen young people are calling for urgent action to address the climate emergency we declared last year.”

A panel of sustainability professionals, Alec Tang (Auckland Council), Claire Walker (SkyCity), Amy Tea (Amy Tea Consulting) and Holly Leach (Sustainable Business Network) are speaking at today’s [launch](#) about how the survey results can support them in their roles.

Read the full report [here](#).

ENDS

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