



MEDIA RELEASE

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Call for New Zealand Government to become global leader in sustainability

The Sustainable Business Network is calling for the incoming New Zealand Government to take bold action to become a global leader in sustainability.

“We believe there is an untapped opportunity for New Zealand to become a global leader in this field. We have so many natural advantages compared to other nations, coupled with an entrepreneurial and innovative mind set, which makes sustainability leadership a great opportunity for business and Government,” says CEO of the Sustainable Business Network Rachel Brown.

“Coming out of the Global Financial Crisis, there is a greater push for innovative businesses across New Zealand to embrace sustainability. It can bring many advantages, such as improved brand value and reputation, attracting international investment, meeting consumer demand, providing a platform for innovation, increased resource efficiency, staff retention and strengthening stakeholder relations.

“Sustainability brings economic opportunity. At the launch of the [‘Green Growth’](#) report, Pure Advantage Chairman Rob Morrison said, “We firmly believe on the basis of this significant macroeconomic report that New Zealand has the potential to generate billions of dollars in new high-value economic growth, whilst at the same time improving New Zealand’s environmental performance”.

“What we need now is a re-alignment of policies to lift the game for sustainable businesses and position New Zealand as a global sustainability leader. I encourage all voters to check out the different political parties’ policies on these issues,” says Rachel.

Sustainability issues affect us in many aspects of our daily lives – in the way we do business, how we travel, how we use energy, our water quality, our education, housing, community and more. These issues cut across the political spectrum.

The Sustainable Business Network believes that many of the existing systems in New Zealand need reforming. Our waterways are in crisis, our industrial food systems need a major overhaul, our economy is dependent on fossil fuels, our transport fleet is almost entirely powered by non-renewable energy sources and social inequality is increasing. Meanwhile, global concerns such as the food-energy-water security nexus are heightening.

“We believe that this is an opportune time for the incoming Government to embrace the need for change. As we come out of the recession we need investment into new thinking, sector collaboration and new business models, because the old ones are no longer serving us,” says Rachel.

“Organisations are ready to rethink the systems they are part of, even though bringing about a systemic shift appears daunting. Once key people embrace the need for change, innovation takes over, the emerging pioneering practices create a tipping point and those systems start to shift.

“Transformation offers enormous opportunities, which many businesses across New Zealand are already benefiting from. The Sustainable Business Network is working with them to help scale and speed up this transformation and we are encouraged and excited by the opportunities and desire from business that we are seeing.

“To become a global leader in sustainability, we need positive ‘pull’ policies that foster innovation and let go of the dead and dying industries of the past, as well as legislation to lift the performance of low-achieving businesses.

“Together, with political and public support, we can create a better economic future for our country and a better quality of life for New Zealanders,” says Rachel.

The Sustainable Business Network focuses on practical activity to support business and does not normally comment on policy issues. However, since we believe this is a timely opportunity for the Government to take a global lead on sustainability, we have put together our position on a series of election issues.

SBN’s position on election issues

- **Climate change**

Climate change is well underway and if we continue as we are, by 2030 our net emissions will rise to 160% above 1990 levels (Ministry of Environment projections), which is almost double 1990 levels.

SBN position

We believe the Government should commit to a progressive climate change policy (by fixing the Emissions Trading Scheme or allowing for a Carbon Tax), that sees investment in the retention of earners for low carbon activities and industries. This

includes investing in clean technologies, renewable energy and smart transport options to make it easier for people to move away from transport powered by fossil fuels.

- **Energy**

New Zealand currently holds one of the leading positions globally in renewable energy sources for electricity use. With around 75% of our electricity coming from renewable energy at present, our economy (particularly transportation) is heavily dependent on fossil fuels. Many systems are built around inefficient, dated practices.

SBN position

To increase the resilience of our economy we need policies that increase investment in renewable sources of energy, and far more efficient use of energy. We need policies that specifically support ongoing investment in renewables and non-fossil fuel based modes of transport, mega efficiency and the circular economy.

- **Transport**

In the efforts to move towards sourcing all our energy from renewable sources, one of our biggest challenges is transport. Almost all the energy sourced to power our national fleet is non-renewable. The current situation has exposed us to the environmental risks associated with greenhouse gases and climate change, and also jeopardises the security of our energy supply and dependency as a nation on the global energy markets.

SBN position

We believe we need a system shift to smart transport. This movement is in line with other nations. Nationally a range of pioneering transport options exist which have the potential for scale, replication and mass promotion. There are business opportunities in capitalising on emerging technology, integration with home energy systems, and better utilisation of the national fleet, including electric and self-drive vehicles. We need policies and practices that will help realise these opportunities.

- **Water quality**

New Zealand waterways are in crisis and are costing us in terms of degraded water quality, erosion, and reduced aquatic productivity. This is now impacting on broader food systems and the quality of our tourist experience and export branding.

SBN position

We believe that increased riparian planting (planting alongside waterways) is a very practical first step in improving our waterways. We also believe that if New Zealanders have a stake in cleaning up our waterways, the outcome is likely to be more successful.

- **Investment**

Our current financial system supports investment in non-sustainable practices (including fossil fuels). For example, most investment funds, including KiwiSaver funds, have little to no sustainability criteria. This means that when fund managers select companies to invest in, they don't include environmental or social factors as part of their investment criteria.

SBN position

We believe that by investing in more sustainable companies and systems, we can make a real difference towards progressing sustainability in New Zealand. This means using all investment schemes (public and private) and refocusing to invest in clean technologies and divesting from (stopping investing in) fossil fuels.

- **Education and jobs**

Throughout our education sectors we're not developing the skills this country needs as we shift to a 21st century economy. The skills we need in our future workforce are very different to those of only 10-20 years ago. They include such new skills as understanding alternative energy systems in homes and workplaces, solar panel installation, alternative transport systems, understanding the value of social issues in business so they are embedded as part of business proposition, and communications and marketing that have honesty and integrity.

SBN position

We believe we need investment in an education system that will grow the interest and skills required for a sustainable economy. This will include integrating sustainability through all of the sciences and technology into school and tertiary curricula. Professional development across industry sectors should also recognise the place sustainability will play in the new economy. We believe the issues are systemic and require a deeper look at how to up-skill the teaching force and provide the support and inspiration they need to stay up to date with the rapidly changing world.

- **Agriculture**

Globally, the industrial food system is in crisis. All aspects of the food system are affected – ranging from the growing and production of food to its distribution, consumption and disposal.

The challenges we face are three-fold: environmental, social and economic. With a growing global population and increasingly degraded ecosystems, we require fundamental systemic shifts, widespread education and training, and a shift to a decentralised agricultural system and food economy.

SBN position

This shift will require new skills to grow food using an agriculture model which is biologically based, diverse, decentralised and knowledge intensive, while also distributing value and income. Local and global markets are asking for safe, healthy foods. Massive opportunities exist around improving agricultural production techniques, renewable energy, transport, packaging and storage infrastructure, as well as informing and influencing consumer and commercial behaviour

- **Social equity**

New Zealand currently has a high disparity between rich and poor which is outlined in the 2014 Salvation Army report titled 'Striking a Better Balance'. The Salvation Army remains deeply concerned at the lack of progress in reducing child poverty, family violence, the harmful use of alcohol, and the failure to address criminal re-offending and serious crime.

SBN position

We believe that all businesses have an impact on the community they work in. That community is made up of employees, supply chain, physical location, products and services and existing community investment programmes. SBN wants all businesses to ensure that the impact that they are having on their communities is positive and that they are creating social value by being in operation.

We believe we need policies that encourage affordability and equity, and that help ensure business meets its community needs, such as: meaningful employment, fair pay and conditions, and affordability of housing, health, energy and water.

[Click here](#) to find out about sustainable business activity already taking place in New Zealand in the following areas: climate change, energy, transport, water quality, investment, education & jobs, agriculture and social equity.

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About the Sustainable Business Network

The Sustainable Business Network (SBN) provides advice and support to help business succeed through becoming more sustainable. As the largest organisation of businesses dedicated to sustainability in New Zealand, the SBN actively helps our network of progressive

companies to: collaborate with other innovators and learn; profile stories and connect; and access practical support.

www.sustainable.org.nz

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