



MEDIA RELEASE

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New campaign to help businesses take more responsibility for what they make

A business campaign to increase ‘product take back’ schemes has won the support of the Government’s Waste Minimisation Fund.

Product stewardship is when producers, brand owners, importers, retailers and/or consumers accept responsibility for reducing a product’s environmental impact.

It involves greater oversight and control throughout the whole life cycle, from production through to end of use and beyond. It means avoiding wasteful products and eliminating unnecessary waste. It also means redesigning products and doing more to ensure products and materials are recycled or reused.

The Government’s Waste Minimisation Fund has granted \$160,000 to the Sustainable Business Network (SBN) for a two-year campaign to promote this. The work will include a national roadshow to explain and promote product stewardship. This aims to increase the number of businesses offering ‘take-back’ product stewardship schemes. The ultimate goal is to increase the product stewardship schemes accredited by the Ministry for the Environment. There are currently 13.

One example is the Interface ReEntry Programme. This recycles used carpet tiles into new carpet tiles and other products. Carpet tiles beyond their usable life are returned to the original manufacturer in the U.S. They are stripped and remanufactured.

Schemes like these cut waste and return valuable materials back into production.

The roadshows will be followed up with a national campaign encouraging business buyers to ask “what will I do with this at the end of its life?” when purchasing.

Rachel Brown is CEO of SBN. She says: *“It’s fundamental to our future that we all take greater responsibility for the environmental impacts of what we do in our personal and professional lives. If businesses are not providing their customers with an end of life solution they are presenting them with an end of life problem. That has to be managed and paid for by the customer or rate payers.*

“Product stewardship schemes help solve the waste issue. They enable businesses to capture valuable resources. They create better and deeper relationships with customers. These are vital steps towards the emerging low carbon circular economy, which we are helping grow in NZ together with our members.”

The grant was approved by Eugenie Sage, Associate Minister for the Environment, and will comprise 84% of the total cost of the campaign. Campaign partners include 3R Group, Inzide Commercial, Fuji Xerox and Abilities Group.

The grant comes as the Ministry for the Environment opens its consultation on new product stewardship proposals, announced today. They include regulations to help New Zealand transition from a linear 'throw-away' culture based on 'take-make-waste', to a circular economy based on 'make-use-return'.

Rachel says: *"The proposals back businesses taking greater responsibility for what happens to their products and packaging at the end of their life. It's exciting to see a renewed emphasis on government and business working together on this. We're especially pleased to see packaging included as a priority product. Our current work on plastic packaging is demonstrating strong business support for urgent action in this area."*

In addition, SBN is currently running a series of masterclasses in partnership with Foodstuffs, NZ King Salmon and the Ministry for Primary Industries. These bring together industry experts, business leaders and regulators, to improve New Zealand's plastic packaging systems.

Many of the participating companies are signatories to the New Plastics Economy (NPEC) Global Commitment. The initial commitment is to ensure 100% of plastic packaging can be easily and safely reused, recycled, or composted by 2025 in practice. One of the goals of the masterclass series is to enable companies to meet and exceed this commitment.

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Notes for editors:

SBN's Product Stewardship Campaign

This two-year campaign aims to stimulate 25 businesses to establish new or join existing product stewardship schemes.

A national campaign will be backed with guidance, inspiration, technical expertise and resources to help business develop product stewardship schemes.

Year one of the campaign involves designing and running a business-to-business Product Stewardship Road Show at five locations across the country. The road show will showcase existing schemes and share best practice. The second part of the campaign will engage businesses on pathways to product stewardship, for example through one-on-one consultation and connecting businesses to relevant resources.

Waste Minimisation Fund

The purpose of the Waste Minimisation Fund (WMF) is to boost New Zealand's performance in waste minimisation. The WMF invests in infrastructure, services, and educational activity throughout New Zealand. The fund is enabled through the waste disposal levy.

There is considerable scope in New Zealand to reduce waste and increase the recovery of useful resources from waste. Lifting our performance in recovering economic value from waste also provides environmental, social and cultural benefits and reduces the risks of harm from waste. More information about the fund can be found on the Ministry for the Environment website (<https://www.mfe.govt.nz/more/funding/waste-minimisation-fund/about-waste-minimisation-fund>)