



MEDIA RELEASE

22 September 2021

New Zealand missing out on economic gains by not shifting much faster to a circular economy

Despite signs of change, Aotearoa New Zealand is transitioning too slowly to a low carbon circular economy. That's the main finding in a 'state of the nation' report released today by the Sustainable Business Network (SBN).

The slow transition means we're losing out economically. A [2018 study](#) led by SBN showed Auckland could be \$8.8 billion better off in 2030 if it shifted to a circular economy. It would also have much lower carbon emissions.

"Going Full Circle" assesses the state of the circular economy in Aotearoa New Zealand in 2021.

James Griffin, General Manager Projects & Advisory at the Sustainable Business Network, is the lead author. He says: "The state of the climate, resource depletion and degradation of nature require immediate action. Businesses need to move beyond an incremental focus on recycling to much more progressive strategies to meet these challenges.

"There are a raft of benefits for companies that incorporate more 'circular' practices, including business opportunities, staff retention, greater market share and enhanced brand. A growing number of people are already choosing products and services that won't add to our waste problem. If businesses don't start to adjust now they are putting off the inevitable."

In response to the findings, SBN is launching the Go Circular 2025 programme in partnership with New Zealand Trade and Enterprise, Ministry for the Environment, Waste Management and Āmiomio Aotearoa.

The programme will provide practical tools and resources to help Kiwi businesses thrive in a low carbon circular economy. A key focus will be the creation of Aotearoa New Zealand's first circular economy directory. It will feature businesses that offer circular economy-based products and services, as well as case studies.

The programme will build on the signs of progress shown in the 'Going Full Circle' report.

They include work to improve packaging; growing consumer demand for products that won't end up in landfill; more sustainable procurement policies; new business models; incorporation of mātauranga Māori in government policy; and new legislation such as a ban on single-use plastic bags.

A circular economy is based on the principles of designing out waste and pollution, keeping products and materials in use, and regenerating natural systems. The past 80 years

have been dominated by a 'take-make-waste' linear economy which is taking a massive toll on the environment.

Read [Executive Summary](#) of "Going Full Circle: six focus areas for shifting New Zealand to a low carbon circular economy"

[Download photo of James Griffin](#), Sustainable Business Network

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Notes for editors:

Quotes from project partners

Grace Ashman, Sustainability Lead, New Zealand Trade and Enterprise | Te Taurapa Tūhono:

"NZTE is proud to support Go Circular 2025 and help give businesses knowledge and connections to move from 'take-make-waste' to the circular economy. It's a huge opportunity for businesses not just to reduce environmental impact, but to become more efficient, resilient and ready to meet demand for sustainable products and services around the world."

Sam Buckle, Deputy Secretary Resource Efficiency and Water and Land Use Policy, Ministry for the Environment:

"We're thrilled to partner with Sustainable Business Network in Go Circular 2025.

MfE has an ambitious work programme to accelerate New Zealand's transition towards a circular economy. But everyone has a role to play in making it happen.

Go Circular 2025 is making it easy for small and medium business to access practical resources to implement circular economy practices – and we're right behind this pioneering initiative."

Ingrid Cronin Knight, GM Strategy, Customer and Sustainability, Waste Management:

"Waste Management's strategy is to be a leader in the circular economy, enabling a carbon positive future for Aotearoa New Zealand. All major decisions are viewed through a materials recovery and carbon lens. Supporting Go Circular 2025 helps Waste Management share the importance of minimising waste and reducing greenhouse gas emissions with the rest of those living and working in Aotearoa New Zealand."

Dr Eva Collins, Director, New Zealand Institute for Business Research:

"Our environment has reached a global tipping point. Moving to a circular economy will support New Zealand's long term competitiveness, create value and enable a transition to a sustainable, low-emission climate resilient future that supports the wellbeing of our people and our place."

About the Sustainable Business Network

The Sustainable Business Network (SBN) is the largest sustainable business organisation in Aotearoa New Zealand, with a network of hundreds of businesses, social enterprises and councils. SBN is transforming NZ business to meet the world's sustainability challenges, with world-class resources, professional training and deeper connections. SBN provides Kiwi businesses with the tools and connections to act on climate, design out waste and regenerate nature.

www.sustainable.org.nz

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