

REPORT 5
(1215/52/IM)

PARLIAMENTARY COMMISSION FOR THE ENVIRONMENT FORUM

1. Background

The keynote event for the anniversary of the founding of the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment was the [PCE20 Forum: 'Advancing environmental sustainability'](#) in Wellington on 1 and 2 March. It took the opportunity to look at New Zealand's sustainability progress over the past 20 years, and at what the next 20 might hold.

The forum featured a world-class line-up of [international experts and panelists](#) on environmental sustainability. A [high profile group of New Zealanders](#) also took part.

The Hon Margaret Wilson opened the conference. It was well attended, with high quality speakers and delegates. The Ilott Chamber was full. We enjoyed the excellent opportunities for networking. The first day was particularly inspiring and challenging.

The Commissioner is one of three Parliamentary Officers who reports to the Speaker of The House - ensuring that those responsible for New Zealand's system of environmental management and the performance of public authorities in maintaining and improving the quality of our environment are accountable to Parliament, not the Executive or the Government of the day.

For seven years after its establishment, the New Zealand PCE was unique - the only one in the world with the power to examine critically the policy decisions of executive government.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:

1. *Receive the information.*

3. Key Messages Summary

Since being the first country to set up this sort of environmental watchdog (PCE), we've made progress over the past 20 years but we have a long way to go.

We are however only possibly a quarter of the way on the journey to sustainability.

We lack Strategy and Leadership and we need leadership at all levels (government and community) plus support for that leadership. While it's risky for politicians to run too far ahead of public concerns, there is an absence of national standards and policies.

3 year term and short term thinking is unhelpful.

Seabed and Foreshore issues have scared the Government off progress in sustainable marine management.

MftE is largely nobbled as an agency. Government's only environmental advocate is DoC, which is under pressure from funding and other Government agencies despite its high level of public appreciation.

Key NZ weaknesses include increasing Climate Change emissions (especially transport), energy use, waste generation, loss of biodiversity, poor marine management, freshwater quality (runoff)

New Zealand has an adversarial rather than collaborative culture towards solving environmental problems, exacerbated by an unwillingness to accept valid criticism.

There are economic threats and opportunities from global environmental awareness especially in Western countries. NZ's 'Clean Green Image' is waiting to be exposed as soon as somebody 'puts their finger through the tissue paper'. While the simplistic air-miles threat has been dismissed, the general issue of where people buy from and the local/global impact is gaining currency.

Performance indicators for what matters are key since "we manage what we measure". This applies to individuals' job performance as well as organisational indicators.

New Zealand is very environmentally under-regulated compared to Canada and Europe e.g. with regard to vehicle emissions. Visitors couldn't believe the exhaust fumes from the vehicle fleet.

Rapid improvements are possible – for example, Salt Lake City aimed to reduce CO₂ emissions by 30% by 2012 and achieved it by 2006.

We are at a tipping point of public consciousness.

Carbon is not the only footprint (i.e. Climate Change is important and urgent but attention must also be given to pest control, nitrate run-off into waterways etc.)

Education is vital but environmental education is neither compulsory nor integrated into the curriculum. Enviroschools Foundation is working closely with Ministry of Education.

University research could look at more real case studies and actual initiatives should count towards professional development as well as research dollars and papers published.

Some educational opportunities for elected members would be appreciated.

A silo approach, whether viewing the economy and the environment as totally separate, within Councils e.g. drainage and parks or between academic subjects, is unhelpful. People need to believe it is their job to create a more sustainable society.

We need to focus on the quality of life that will result from decisions. Human progress can become rooted in human need for (over and above basic needs) culture, family and creativity rather than increasing consumption of material goods.

We need to move on from the refrain “We’re doomed. We’re doomed”, in order to make progress on these issues.

Key Speakers

- International panellists included :
- [Dr Guenther Bachmann](#)
- [Prof Tim Jackson](#)
- [Dr Ian McPhail](#)
- [Gord Miller](#)
- [Prof Peter Newman](#)
- [Dr Ingeborg Niestroy](#)
- [Prof Tim O’Riordan](#)
- [Dr Rosemary Purdie](#)
- [Dr Bart Wesselink](#)

Locals included a high profile group of New Zealanders took part in [forum panels](#). They included politicians, environmentalists, business people, scientists, academics and local government leaders. The list included:

Hon Margaret Wilson Speaker of the House of Representatives

Dr J. Morgan Williams Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment

Helen Beaumont Assistant Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment

Hon David Benson-Pope	Minister for the Environment, Minister of Social Development
Dr Carol Boyle	Senior lecturer, Dept of Civil and Environmental Engineering, University of Auckland
Kevin Brady	Auditor-General
Jo Brosnahan	Chairperson, Leadership NZ; formerly CEO Auckland Regional Council
Rachel Brown	CEO, Sustainable Business Network
Prof Paul Callaghan	MacDiarmid Institute of Advanced Materials Science and Technology, Victoria University
Prof Ralph Chapman	Director, Environmental Studies, Victoria University
Karen Cronin	Senior lecturer (part-time), Environmental Studies, Victoria University
Peri Drysdale	CEO, Untouched World
Rob Fenwick	Director, Living Earth Ltd
Jeanette Fitzsimons	MP, Co-Leader Green Party
Dr Bob Frame	Science leader, Sustainability and Society, Landcare Research
Lindsay Gow	Deputy CEO, Ministry for the Environment
Dr Wren Green	Director, EcoLogic Conservation Consultants
Dr Bronwyn Hayward	Lecturer, Political Science and Communication, University of Canterbury
Prof Philippa Howden-Chapman	Director, Housing and Health Research Programme, University of Otago
Prof Ken Hughey	Environment, Society and Design Division, Lincoln University
David Jacobs	Director, Connected Media Trust
Dr Bryan Jenkins	CEO, Environment Canterbury
Shane Jones	Labour MP, Chairperson Finance and Expenditure Committee
Judge Shonagh Kenderdine	Alternate Judge, Environment Court

Dr Barry Law	Principal lecturer, Experiential and Environmental Education, Christchurch College of Education
Judy Lawrence	Former Director, NZ Climate Change Office; Director, PS Consulting
Hugh Logan	CEO, Ministry for the Environment
Dr Adrian Macey	Climate Change Ambassador, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
Maryanne Macleod	General Manager (Reporting and Review), Ministry for the Environment
Ann Magee	General Manager, Chief Executive's Office, Auckland Regional Council
Wendy McGuinness	Chartered accountant and current member of Sustainable Development Reporting Committee; co-convenor of Sustainable Aotearoa New Zealand
Veronika Meduna	Journalist, Radio NZ, Co-Presenter 'Our Changing World'
Peter Neilson	Chief Executive, Sustainable Business Council
Rod Oram	International business journalist and columnist
Sir Geoffrey Palmer	President NZ Law Commission; former Prime Minister; former Minister for the Environment
Dennis Parker	Business Manager UC Opportunity, University of Canterbury; former General Manager Macpac NZ
Dr John Penno	CEO, Synlait; former research scientist and science programme leader at Dairying Research Corporation (Dexcel)
Dr Tony Petch	Group Manager, Resource Information, Environment Waikato
Dr Paul Reynolds	Assistant Director-General (Policy), Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
Dr Lin Roberts	CEO, The Natural Step (NZ)
Prof Juliet Roper	Chairperson, Dept of Management Communication, University of Waikato
Prof Caroline Saunders	Agribusiness and Economics Research Unit, Lincoln University
Dr Louis Schipper	Senior lecturer, Dept of Earth and Ocean Sciences, University of Waikato

Dr Pita Sharples	MP, Maori Party
Peter Skelton	Associate Professor, Resource Management Law, Lincoln University; former Environment Court judge
Dr Nick Smith	National MP (Nelson); former Minister of Conservation
Dr Willie Smith	Acting Director, School of Geography and Environmental Science, University of Auckland
Prof Ian Spellerberg	Director, Isaac Centre for Nature Conservation, Lincoln University
Hon Jim Sutton	Chairperson, Landcorp; former Minister of Overseas Trade; former Minister of Agriculture
Bruce Taylor	Principal Investigator, Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment
Simon Terry	Managing director, STA Ltd; Executive director, Sustainability Council of NZ
Dr Steve Thompson	CEO, Royal Society of New Zealand; former CEO, Foundation for Research, Science and Technology
Cath Wallace	Chairperson, Environmental and Conservation Organisations of NZ; Senior lecturer, School of Government, Victoria University
Pam Williams	Education for Sustainability Advisor/ Research Fellow, School of Geography, Environment and Earth Sciences, Victoria University
Dorothy Wilson	Advisor, Mayor's Office, Auckland City Council; former Deputy Mayor, Waitakere City Council
Peter Winder	CEO, Auckland Regional Council
David Young	Writer (author of forthcoming history on PCE and environmental sustainability in NZ)

Their profiles can be found at www.pce.govt.nz

Helen Hughes, the first PCE and Jan Wright, the incoming PCE also participated.

4. Action Points for Council to Consider

Strategic

- Genuine Progress Indicator – need to ensure that the WRS does measure GPI as agreed.
- Review our indicators

- Have a longer horizon for our reports
- Create a comprehensive Climate Change response integrated into all appropriate strategies (NB in forward programme)
- Transport/Urban Form – next steps in reducing emission growth/improved energy efficiency.
- Ensure any relevant PCE reports are referenced in policy development. Leadership – are we providing it ?
- Electoral Term encourages short term thinking

Monitoring

- Improve our performance indicators and influence Wellington Regional Strategy indicators

Community

- Involve the public in measuring and implementing Wellington's Community Outcomes
- Supporting Community Engagement in the environment – we have an excellent base. Need to develop and support further.

Action

- Produce a strong Biodiversity Action Plan in consultation with the community and provide implementation \$ (note this covers the whole city and not just our land)
- Lead by example in preserving biodiversity on our land, sustainable buildings, environmentally-friendly businesses and WCC's own emissions
- Review our vehicle fleet
- We should report on, review and renew our purchasing policy so that it has some impact

Education

- Show environmental indicators (e.g.) on the Odlins Building from time to time!
- Increase education about living within ecological limits and increase co-operative work with Wellington schools on transport, waste and biodiversity
- We should continue to support enviro – schools working with the next generation

Energy

- Renewable energy – we've made a start in creating environment for consideration of wind farms. Awaiting report from our new energy manager.
- Encourage green buildings through planning, guidelines and example

5. Conclusion

WCC is already participating in a number of initiatives but unless we have high level responsibility and accountability for scientifically valid environmental outcomes, population and economy growth will continue to be damaging to our natural capital.

Staff also attended sessions.

We received the book about the first 20 years of the office and were made aware of the many PCE reports which we commend to policy advisors and councillors alike. See www.pce.govt.nz for a comprehensive list.

We have more detailed notes available on request.

Contact Officer: *Councillors Foster and Wade-Brown*

Supporting Information
1) Strategic Fit / Strategic Outcome <i>This project supports Outcome 7.2.B – More actively engaged: Wellington will operate an open and honest decision making process that generates confidence and trust in the Democratic system</i>
2) LTCCP/Annual Plan reference and long term financial impact <i>Relates to C534: Elections, Governance and Democratic Process</i>
3) Treaty of Waitangi considerations <i>There are no Treaty of Waitangi implications</i>
4) Decision-Making <i>This is not a significant decision</i>
5) Consultation a) General Consultation <i>Not required</i> b) Consultation with Maori <i>Not required</i>
6) Legal Implications <i>Nil</i>
7) Consistency with existing policy <i>This report is consistent with existing Wellington City Council policy</i>