

Annual Report to trustees and funders 2008-2009.

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A. Course participants profile at entry & actions by exit from courses

B. Longer term impact of course - follow up sample phone survey (part 1 of 2)

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Looking back on 2008-09.

Trust Chairman's introduction by Tony Moore

As you will be well aware, the economic climate has changed considerably over the last year and Sustainable Living has been well placed to assist communities through such times. This has revealed itself through renewed public interest in our home gardening, food preservation, energy efficiency and shopping wisely course content. This can help households cut costs and enhance a healthy quality of life, with a smaller footprint on the planet (as they can live well without quite so much 'stuff').

In these hard times we are extremely fortunate to have a strong base of support from our growing number of partner Councils. Recent additions bringing us to 26 partners include Manukau and Hutt City Councils (an early supporter, rejoining), Far North, Waipa, Wanganui and Waitaki District Councils and the Department of Conservation – welcome on board!! This growing support allows the Sustainable Living Education Trust to continue delivering benefits to communities throughout much of the country. As well as recruiting, in some years we also lose a few councils, as key staff and policies change - in 2008 we said farewell to Kapiti Coast and the West Coast councils group, and, at the end of this year, to Kaikoura District and probably Southland (subject to LTCCP decisions). Staff at several more North and South Island councils, are in contact with us, with a view to joining next year.

Apart from a net growth in partner councils, some highlights from this financial year to June 2009 include:

- 84 Courses and seminars supported by our materials across NZ, with 1664 participants. See Appendix E1 and E2.
- **Ministry for the Environment one year funding** to enhance marketing, delivery and content of the programme, and, in collaboration with 'Choices' from Sustainability Trust, a project to seek improved monitoring information.
- The January 2009 appointment of contractor Jennifer Kerr as our **North Island Co-ordinator** to better meet the needs of our northern partners, using fewer air-kms than previous provision of this service from Christchurch.
- Production of the 2009 update to the education materials - the facilitator CD is now available for partner councils and tutors.
- A successful bid to the **Sustainable Management Fund**, commencing July 2009, to include resilience as a new theme within the programme. Once developed, this will equip course participants with better ability to help themselves and others in their community to face challenges such as pandemics, adverse weather events (climate change) and high energy prices (peak oil). See Appendix D.
- Numerous **marketing opportunities** that have lifted the profile of the Sustainable Living and course participants, such as appearances on TV1's Good Morning Show, National Radio interviews, advertising in NZ Gardener and GOOD Magazine, presence at Earth Hour, Eco-Expo, Walk to Work Day and similar sustainability events around the country and even at the Ellerslie Flower Show. We had an independent marketing reviewer look at our work this summer.
- We have received confirmation of our **charity status** (number CC 37224) and our **first donation** of \$1,000 by a philanthropic individual in Dunedin. Our charity status will allow such supporters to claim tax back on donations made.
- The **six Trustees** from Councils throughout New Zealand have been appointed and met by teleconference every six to eight weeks to oversee the running of the programme, to ensure it meets the needs of our partners. We seek to recruit one additional North Island trustee in 2009-10 and expect one retirement in South Island.

The political climate has also changed nationally this year and following this numerous Government spending cuts, often it seems to organisations and services with a sustainability focus. One of the most recent announcements is the Budget cut of funds allocated to adult and community education at high schools, affecting more than 200,000 course participants (across all topics) and 200 full and 200 part-time tutors nationally (for information in response from high schools see <http://www.stopnightclasscuts.org.nz/>). This unwelcome cut, made without prior consultation, will limit our ability to deliver the Sustainable Living Programme in its current accessible format through high schools from January 2010 and will disempower many of our independent tutors and NGO providers.

The Trust will register its objection and also consider how best to proceed if these cuts do occur. We will need to innovate when considering the delivery methods for our courses and materials. Options under consideration include:

- Schools, businesses and councils hosting courses or workshops as a part of their sustainability activities; also contributing to staff development and training (several partner councils already do this).
- Councils directly using staff or contracted independent tutors to run free or low cost public courses (as in Dunedin).
- Course participants paying the full 'commercial' cost of courses, perhaps three times higher than now - this inevitably reduces the appeal and accessibility to lower income households.
- Greater use of our tools for self-help study circles – where community organisations, NGOs or individuals host informal study groups without tutors.

- Encouraging the free use of the website material, including more links to it from Council websites, promotion at public libraries, etc. (the website is being enhanced and updated in June '09 to aid this)

Your feedback

We are always looking for ways to improve the Sustainable Living Programme and to enhance outcomes for our partners and their communities. We welcome your feedback on our performance and your progress in the last year, nominations of trustee(s) and any suggestions you have for positively moving forward.

Please send your feedback or any questions you may have to myself (contacts below) or to your nearest of the Sustainable Living Co-ordinators:

South Island & Wellington region - Rhys Taylor (03) 960 2656
rhys@sustainableliving.org.nz

Rest of North Island – Jennifer Kerr (09) 630 0130
jennifer@sustainableliving.org.nz

Best Wishes



Tony Moore
CHAIR, SUSTAINABLE LIVING EDUCATION TRUST

(03) 941 6426 or Tony.Moore@ccc.govt.nz

This annual report provides brief summaries, drawn from more detailed evaluations which are available as a set of appendices (PDF format). Comments from course participants, the users of our community education services, begin the sequence, followed by a profile of participants, then reviews of short term and longer term impacts on behaviour and consumer choices; website data and course statistics. Consistent methodology permits comparison with the previous year reporting. The programme remains in good heart, although currently challenged by the school-based community education funding cuts, and it is still making relevant impacts in participant's lives.

As a registered charity, we report that no fees are being paid to trustees for their governance role, and that there are no salaried staff, no property held, nor fixed office overhead liabilities. All paid work is completed as required by self-employed contractors, working to an annual budget set by the trustees. Contracts are let and accounts kept by the Trust through their agent, Christchurch Council, which receives a fee for accounting services provided. Any donations or grants received by the charity are applied to charitable purposes in line with the Trust Deed (copy available on request).

Thankyou for your interest in our work.

Rhys Taylor, National Coordinator (contractor). 03 960 2656
rhys@sustainableliving.org.nz

Participant evaluations are positive, and also improving on previous years.

Anne Griffiths voluntarily reviewed a sample of participant evaluation sheets gathered from courses at five different locations across NZ, to get an impression from these course completers (detail in appendix H). She reports:

"They were happy with the number of sessions in a class series, and with session lengths. Costs were considered reasonable (fees paid varied between nil and \$60) and some indicated they would have paid more.

Venues were accessible. Some shared (car) transport.

Sessions were rated lively/very stimulating and scored fractionally higher on this scale than in 2007.

Information offered was considered mostly new but not all new, and scoring moved up towards new (54%) compared with 2007 (49%), and it was considered simple and accessible, also realistic and practical (89%), both much as scored in 2007.

All respondents scored their group as 'very friendly' and indicated the experience 'motivated my action' for slightly more (86%) this year than in 2007 (83%)

Visual aid material in 2008 took some criticism, faring worse than in 2007(as a result of which we have updated the slide sets for 2009 edition)

Tutors or group facilitators were thought to have encouraged participation better in 2008 (100%) than in 2007 (88%). (Updating of the facilitator guides after 2007 for 2008 might have helped here?) Variety and humour were valued, and tutors were felt to know their subject well.

Who is taking part in Sustainable Living and what are their views and actions at the outset?

An overview of course participants 2008-2009

Drawn from an independent analysis of sample participant entry and exit questionnaires, by Dr Christine Dann. (See Appendix A.)

Sustainable Living course participants, much as in previous years, have been predominantly female (over 75%), trade or university-educated, salary or wage earning, aged 30 to 60, and 80% were homeowners. Many but not all are urban. About half have school age children in their household.

About two thirds had some previous experience of community education classes, but one third none (a high proportion of new adult learners); about two thirds had

established community group involvement, and one third some religious group involvement - placing them in positions of potential influence on others socially, as role models or information sources. A slightly larger proportion in 08-09 indicated some prior involvement in natural-environment-focused community groups than in previous years, which either reflects a growth in such opportunities for the public and/or a shift in recruitment pattern.

Three quarters claimed concern to see more action in NZ to reduce carbon emissions, similarly to protect water quality and diversity of natural life. This continues previous years' evidence of clear pro-environmental attitudes found among course recruits. Their one-paragraph descriptions of 'sustainability' showed a rising awareness, accuracy and sophistication compared to participants of a few years ago (see quotes in appendix). The proportion reporting that they were *already* taking pro-sustainability actions was lower than those simply claiming to be sustainability aware, and those claiming to 'consider the environment in most of what they did' were about one quarter of the sample. However, by the end of the course half claimed this attitude. This confirms the role (and supports the explicit marketing) of the course, as a route to grow awareness and motivation towards action at home and in the community.

The most listed topics for information sought were gardening, energy efficiency, building and waste reduction. These four concur with the most often downloaded PDFs topics on our website; also with most of the priorities of MfE's Household Sustainability team. As in previous years, the least requested topic in advance was transport, yet one of the areas where they 'expected to change' at the outset was transport (e.g. less driving, less flying, walking more).

Most participants attend courses held within 3km of their home, yet for the first evening class the majority drove there, one per car, although vehicle sharing was often organised between participants after the first session.

A third reported that they followed environmental news closely and had been seeking information such as that offered by this programme, but others had not previously been seeking environmental information. About half were magazine readers (the titles noted for future advertising or editorial placements) and nearly all used email and had internet skills, but most had not visited the relevant information websites listed as 'prompts' in the entry questionnaire, so for them, web information would not substitute for attending a course.

Most had heard about the course through word of mouth, or newspaper/magazine articles; and a few via brochures (including high school course listings) or email.

The chance to meet people with shared interests and to make new friends was a stated motivator to attend the courses, as in previous years. Exit questionnaires confirmed that enjoying the company of new people was a major motivator to attend the full series, alongside the personal learning experience.

Work and career relevance is mentioned more often than in previous years' sample surveys, which in our view reflects the growing public profile of these issues. Parents mentioned concern for the future and prospects for their children.

Barriers to previous change cited at the outset were lack of time and money, lack of reliable information and a need to reflect and discuss. The course could contribute to three of these. For some, family circumstances or established personal habits and convenience were the barriers to overcome, but few mentioned the external wider society/economy/legislation (perhaps realising that a course may identify but does not usually have impact on structural issues).

What is learned and does it make a difference?

At the outset areas where our sample of participants felt most concerned to make changes were, in descending order: transport, food, waste and the building. At the course end, aside from shortage of time and money, the most often mentioned structural barrier to action was lack of public transport options. The course learning was reported to have made a difference on (in descending order of frequency):

Waste,
Shopping,
Energy,
Gardening,
Building,
Water and
Travel.

Sampled participants' self-assessment of the overall course impact was:

- Helped reduce my carbon footprint and environmental impact (for two thirds)
- Helped me live more healthily (two thirds)
- Achieved some cost savings (three quarters, e.g. on power bills and food growing)

The actions they most often reported by the end of the course were (in each category, bulleted points presented in decreasing order of frequency):

ENERGY RELATED (techniques and tools)

- Turning off unused appliances & room lighting, timing heating...
- Drawing curtains at dusk, warmer clothing, reducing frequency of TV or appliance use, switching to CFL bulbs, switching to energy efficient appliances...
- Improved insulation on ceilings, under floor and on water cylinders, double glazing, draught stopping.
- Heat pumps, heat transfer systems (air from hot to cool rooms) cleaner wood burning.

GARDENING & WATER RELATED

- Organic techniques, avoiding chemicals, making compost
- More appropriate plantings - water saving, use of NZ natives
- Grey water to garden and/or roof water collection
- Water flow restriction - hand held hoses, timers, drip/trickle systems.

INDOOR WATER USE REDUCTION

- Limiting number of baths, short showers, only full loads in washing machines
- Not leaving taps running
- Reducing toilet flush volume or frequency

WATER QUALITY PROTECTION

- Using biodegradable/non toxic (or no) cleaning chemicals

INCREASED WASTE DIVERSION TO REUSE OR RECYCLING

- More items recycled than before (half of participants noted this)
- More and/or changed composting (three quarters of participants now composting)
- Use of worm farms, EM Bokashi and fed to animals

CHANGES IN SHOPPING CRITERIA

- How item produced and where, (most important criteria, especially for food)
- Associated packaging - create less waste
- Cost and value for money
- Durability

TRAVEL

- Reduced trip number and multi-task trips
- More walking (and/or cycling) and plan to be more active
- Switch private vehicle to more fuel efficient one
- More bus use (a few)
- Car pooling (a few)

HOUSE RENOVATIONS PLANNED

- Majority were well settled and did not expect to move soon (fewer mobile than last year), half were considering renovations (more than last year)
- New knowledge gained from course on building materials and energy aspects.

Participants consistently enjoyed the courses, claimed to be highly motivated at exit and that the information acquired was credible, because it helped them understand that actions are possible and gave them confidence to try. **All respondents indicated they would recommend the programme to others, and many had already done so**, as both 'necessary change' and 'good value'.

The knowledge gained was mostly for personal or family application, but this year some participants wrote that taking part was a way to build and/or serve their community. This is interesting evidence of the shift from just a personal responsibility towards collective concern, also reflected (we suggest) in the growth of 'transition towns' and similar sustainability-focussed community groups in New Zealand. It suggests that developing our new topic on 'community resilience' in 2009-2010 is timely.

Asked if and how they intend to interest others in sustainability, half the participants sampled indicated scope for making input to local groups and a few were potential

networkers or tutors. Many had already shared material with partner/spouse and some with friends (topics most often shared were shopping, energy, waste, composting).

Reviewers' reflections on our information gathering

The independent analysis this year has shed useful light on limitations of current questionnaire design, as a result of which they have been withdrawn from the 2009 facilitator materials and will be replaced by shorter, multiple choice entry and exit questionnaires, which can be filled in more quickly on paper (and also perhaps on-line). We also planned to offer on-line calculators for areas where data can realistically be assembled to show change over time, such as carbon footprint.

The first of these is the free carboNZero domestic calculator provided by Landcare Research www.carbonzero.co.nz which now has a downloadable user information sheet for Sustainable Living class participants, provided by us, on its web page. We will in due course have access to data entered by any user who prefixes their user name on that site with SL; and can also supply course information to those other carboNZero site users who request it.

The second data gathering opportunity, originally planned for commencement in Term 1, February 2009 is the Choices database from Sustainability Trust, a project also MfE funded this year. Although substantial time has been invested by our National Coordinator since November, responding to requests for input to design, testing and development of successive versions of Choices, the software on which we rely in our planned data gathering is still not functioning adequately. We have thus been unable to test it via any course participants before mid June 2009, leaving a significant and disappointing gap in monitoring activity for this financial year, due to a timetable delayed beyond our control. We have an MOU with Sustainability Trust for future collaboration which may allow us to begin this data collection soon.

Longer term impacts of course participation.

Helen Ough Dealey interviewed a random selection of course completers from the previous 2007-2008 year, on courses spread across NZ. (Results are summarised in Appendix B.)

As in previous years, they have read and retained the notes, discussed learning with their family and begun to take the more strategic and expensive actions, such as home insulation, appliance upgrades and travel pattern changes. Lawns are being dug up to grow food, shopping choices and house cleaning habits/chemicals have altered. A few have taken their learning further especially in garden-related themes, as in previous surveys.

Marketing the courses and the programme.

Susie Trinh has completed a review of our marketing actions and prospects 2009-10. (Details appear at Appendix C)

She concludes:

"After seven years development, SLET has been successful at raising the profile of the Sustainable Living programme. This is apparent from multiple television appearances and articles about the courses. As other, larger NGOs might be better suited at raising awareness for sustainability and climate issues, SLET should focus on specific targeted communication and marketing related to actions. Thus far, the most effective leads to course enrolment have been free to low cost, such as stories in newspapers, email lists and referrals from friends and family. Marketing should now make the transition into making word of mouth communication by allies easier. This can be done through visual material such as stickers, reusable bags, and postcards and through interactive upgrades to the website.

"As much as possible, any information published about the programme should include a link to the website and specific date, time, and location of courses in their local area. Finding information about a course needs to be simple and painless. The website holds details about courses by region but also needs to contain 'typical' and specific course content information.

"Key messages will need to be redefined in respect to the current changing political and economic climate. These messages emphasize ways to save money, grow food, share experiences and the other benefits the course can provide that an informational book or website on its own can not. A major strength of the Sustainable Living courses is the ongoing face-to-face interaction between not only student and tutor but within a group of students. The course provides an optimal forum for discussion-based learning. It provides a place to make friends and find support in taking action to live more sustainably."

Responses to the marketing plan (Appendix C.) are already in hand, with website upgrade completed in June 2009, responding also to Susie's earlier website critique (see Appendix G).

Website information provision and use

Rhys Taylor reports:

The two current websites have different functions, but we are moving towards combining these at the domain www.sustainableliving.org.nz (to which other domain names, including sustainable households, will ultimately be redirected)

Sustainable Living website has maintained its popularity during the year, but with a summer dip in use. It has a larger number of page hits and volume of downloaded material per month than a year ago, reflecting the increased content available. This will grow again in 2009-2010 as more material is brought across from the Sustainable Households site. **Total number of unique visitors/year is over 14,800.**

The older Sustainable Households website gets a proportion of its visitors from look-up links through Sustainable Living site (e.g. to deliver PDFs, hence the higher bandwidth recorded on this site), and the site content is being transferred across to Sustainable Living site from end June 2009. **19,000 unique visitors in last 12 months**, some of which had visited the SL site first, but many were arriving via search engines or weblinks. (See charts in Appendix F):

The site use statistics (*awstats* used on both sites) show how the current sites respond differently to search engines, have been linked to by different external web pages and currently provide different information to users.

All the available PDF downloads on 'action' held at the Sustainable Households site, but accessible from both sites, are visited more frequently than any of downloads on 'issues', much as in previous years. In part this is due to action links appearing on the 2008-2009 home page at Sustainable Living site, but not the issue links (which are on the quiz page) The downloaded files, in descending order of frequency for the sampled Quarterly period April-June 2009, are:

- energy_insulation_action.pdf
- organic_growing_action.pdf
- save_energy_action.pdf
- reduce_rubbish_action.pdf
- gardening_sustainably_action.pdf
- save_water_action.pdf
- reduce_car_use_action.pdf
- sustainable_shopping_action.pdf
- waste_composting_action.pdf

Followed by the issues PDFs, again in descending order:

- waste_at_home1.pdf
- water_at_home1.pdf
- sustainable_garden2.pdf
- intro_sustainability1.pdf
- car_travel_impacts1.pdf
- energy_at_home1.pdf
- shopping_issues1.pdf

Then smaller numbers of other downloads: back issues of the newsletter, research papers, etc.

The most common (top 10%) **search phrases** in this past quarter at Sustainable Households site have been:

House insulation, energy efficient, sustainable living and organic gardening. Many other terms have brought traffic to the site over the years, because it is rich in searchable content. The most common search phrases for Sustainable Living site tend to have the words *sustainable, living, house, course, NZ* or specific geographic areas.

Visits to both sites come from search engine users, about 25% of Sustainable Living and 40% (because of its higher searchable information content) of Sustainable Households visits, but the inclusion of the PDFs at Sustainable Living site from June will redress this imbalance. Direct address entry, showing recognition of www.sustainableliving.org.nz from media coverage, flyers, etc. and some computer

url-bookmarking by return visitors, has grown this year, to reach 60% of Sustainable Living visits and 30% of Sustainable Households visits.

Over 120 websites from other organisations were actively linked (i.e. resulting in referrals) to Sustainable Households site in this period, and a further 160 pointed to the Sustainable Living site. They are listed in appendix F. This strong external linking is very good for search engine site ranking. About 20% of site visits come from these links.

----- For further detail see Appendices.-----