

Project 2008

Think Piece 3: December 2007



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Summary

Project 2008 is a byproduct of McGuinness Institute's (formerly Sustainable Future) *Project 2058*. It is a list of specific short-term policy initiatives that we feel could help make New Zealand 'fit' for the purpose of progressing sustainable development.

Project 2008 is a byproduct of *Project 2058*, the aim of which is to promote integrated long-term thinking, leadership and capacity-building so that New Zealand can effectively explore and manage risks and opportunities over the next 50 years. *Project 2058* is about the long term – 50 years, in fact. However, the more the *Project 2058* team has looked into New Zealand's long-term future, the more we have become aware of the things we can do now to make New Zealand 'fit for purpose' in 2008. Just as a cyclist assesses his or her bike to ensure it is fit for the journey, so can New Zealand assess its systems, feedback loops and capacity, to ensure they are capable of developing and delivering quality strategy and policy. This is the rationale behind *Project 2008*, a running list of short-term initiatives and ideas, with the strategic aim of promoting those that can be investigated and ideally implemented in 2008 in order to improve systems, feedback mechanisms and capacity-building.

By treating these initiatives and ideas as separate from *Project 2058* we can maintain the integrity and focus of the larger project, while providing a list of useful suggestions for consideration by Members of Parliament, policy analysts, non-government organisations and others interested in progressing sustainable development in New Zealand. In addition, this list will provide a useful backdrop for identifying, assessing and considering prospective projects for the McGuinness Institute.

The list contains initiatives that we consider are feasible policy goals for New Zealand, and ideas we consider have potential but require further investigation. We have created the list by gathering initiatives and ideas from members of the *Project 2058* team, peer reviewers of Institute reports, readers of our reports and website, other non-governmental organisations and the general public.

To be included on the list, an initiative or idea must be sufficiently specific to be able to be achieved by government and therefore to be ticked off. Ideally it must also be able to be described in one sentence, so that we can create a concise list of suggestions rather than a long report. We will run this project for the length of 2008, and toward the end of the year we intend to publish an updated think piece with the full list of initiatives that we feel could benefit New Zealand.

Project 2008 – Suggested initiatives as at December 2007

Institutionalising Sustainable Development

1. Agree to a National Sustainable Development Strategy, to be ready for implementation by January 2010 (cf. Sustainable Future, 2007a, 2007b).
2. Create a central government strategy 'framework' to devise a structure that allows government organisations to develop their key objectives in harmony with the government's overarching vision. A database of strategies accessible to all stakeholders would help avoid duplication and misalignment of effort (c.f. Sustainable Future, 2007a, 2007b).
3. Create an institution, or designate a current organisation, as a dedicated assessor and reporter on the uptake of sustainable development initiatives within the public service.
4. Develop guidelines for circulation to the central public service, detailing processes for enhanced cohesion, alignment and integration between policy instruments, in order to improve the linkages between national strategies, Statements of Intent and the budgets of departments and ministries (Sustainable Future, 2007b: Recommendation 4).
5. Create, resource and prioritise a group aimed at enhancing communication between the various levels of government.
6. Roll out the Govt3 initiative to include all local and regional councils and state-owned enterprises.
7. Commit to producing State of the Environment reports every five years. (Update: February 2008 – Rt Hon Trevor Mallard has agreed)
8. Produce a report outlining the 'precautionary principle' and 'precautionary approach', as used in government, in order to ensure their consistent and thoughtful application across legislation and policy.
9. Prepare and promote a range of direct incentives and encouragement for district councils to aspire to carbon neutrality, as has been done by the Wellington City Council.

Economic

10. Develop a 'scorecard' of 50–100 key statistics and indicators of sustainable development (for example, percentage of a city developed as green space, or average density of housing), to be reported on annually.
11. Commission an independent review of the effects a Closer Economic Partnership with both China and Thailand would have on:
 - The viability of the New Zealand manufacturing industry;
 - Our current trade deficit;
 - Global environmental sustainability;
 - Social justice issues in these countries.
12. Commit to giving the Treasury the mandate to address sustainability issues:
 - Amend s 26(g) of the Public Finance Act 1989 to include a consideration of sustainable management, along the lines of s 5 of the Resource Management Act 1991;
 - Broaden the Long-Term Fiscal Position (2006) document in order to bring sustainable management principles into consideration; particularly the long-term impacts of climate change, energy and water issues;
 - Commit to putting a process in place to ensure that environmental and social considerations are given effect to in future Statements of Intent (2010–2013).
13. Commission an independent report into the possible use of Genuine Progress Indicators (GPI) as an alternative, or complementary, approach to GDP.

Environment

14. Innovation
 - Commission a review of the structure of the public science funding system to ensure national priorities adequately address future threats and work toward a 'strong sustainability' model (cf. Sustainable Future, 2007a).
15. Climate Change
 - Conduct environmental and social impact assessments of the Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS);
 - Commit to continued efforts alongside the ETS to decouple emissions from economic growth, across all sectors;

- Ensure that the ETS remains in the form signalled in September 2007, especially with regard to the timeline for sectoral introduction, the grandparenting of permits, and the quality of units allowed into the scheme;
 - Bring the agricultural sector into the ETS before 2013, ideally by 2010;
 - Offer the agricultural industry voluntary economic incentives (such as sectoral no-lose targets) to reduce greenhouse gas emissions before 2013;
 - Develop an accounting and reporting framework that collects and collates carbon emissions data from individual emitters (including those operating under the ETS and voluntary schemes) and reconciles these with the total national figure that New Zealand reports to the UN.
16. Other Agriculture and Forestry
- Commission a report to reconcile conflicting figures on the proportion of farms with complete nutrient budgets, and commit to ensuring this reaches 100% by the end of 2008;
 - Ensure regional councils have the resources available, through a national policy statement and/or appropriate funding, to increase compliance with resource consents and permits regarding run off;
 - Commission an independent review of the efficacy of voluntary agreements such as the Clean Streams and Dairying Accord in reducing environmental pressures (OECD, 2007: 17);
 - Increase FRST funding to the soil science sector, in order to increase capability and slow the current loss of science personnel.
17. Oceans
- Develop an Ocean's Policy for the management of both the 200-nautical-mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and the 12-nautical-mile territorial waters by the end of 2008;
 - Establish binding goals for the replenishment of the western hoki stock and ensure fairness is maintained for both large and small industry players;
 - Legislate to ensure that bottom trawling is banned in the remaining 70% of the EEZ;
 - Commission an urgent report examining issues around the mining of deep-sea minerals in the EEZ;
 - Commit to taking all necessary steps for the preservation of Hector's and Maui's dolphins and their habitat.
18. Freshwater
- Finalise the National Policy Statement on Freshwater Management and the relevant National Environmental Standards (including testing and signage around lakes and public swimming areas);
 - Ensure regional councils have the funding and policy guidance to continue, and strengthen, independent monitoring of the Clean Streams Accord. This must be supported by a clear policy statement from central government, outlining its position;
 - Legislate to ensure that 100% of the water supplied to New Zealand homes meets national drinking water guidelines — currently only 85% attains this level of quality (OECD, 2007: 18);
 - Commission a report to review and ascertain sustainable water yield from key aquifers;
 - Commission an independent review of the feasibility of introducing a cap-and-trade system, or similar market-based instrument, to rationalise water allocation in water-stressed regions (as recommended in OECD, 2007: 19);
 - Introduce market-based instruments to internalise the environmental costs of non-point-source discharges from agriculture (as identified in OECD, 2007: 19).
19. Biodiversity
- Finalise a National Policy Statement for biodiversity, emphasising the importance of resolving the issues around coordinated protection of biodiversity on private land;
 - Include specific assessment and adaptation plans for climate change impacts in New Zealand's biodiversity strategy;
 - Strengthen and streamline identification and monitoring of the key drivers of biodiversity loss;
 - Commission a report to ascertain whether the conservation measures in place around our remaining wetlands are sufficient;
 - Introduce mandatory certification of imported tropical timber; it is essential that the government provides clear leadership to ensure New Zealand does not continue to obtain a significant amount of its timber requirements from illegal sources;
 - Commit to the support and development of the Cultural Health Index recently created by the Ministry for the Environment and Otago University researchers;
 - Conduct a review of the impacts the steadily increasing tourist numbers are having on conservation lands and waters, and the possible mitigation of these impacts;
 - Complete an assessment of the enforcement issues surrounding the international trade in New Zealand's rare and endangered species;
 - Commit to social research and education on issues around attitudes to 1080 and mammalian pest control on conservation land, given that it will continue to be used in New Zealand.
20. Waste
- Pass the Waste Minimisation (Solids) Bill;
- Issue national guidelines and a strategy for the reduction and recycling of industrial waste;
 - Commit to ensuring that all regional councils in New Zealand have the capacity to recycle glass by 1 January 2010;
 - Commit to upgrading the state of waste treatment and disposal facilities, and encouraging cooperation between local and regional authorities where appropriate (OECD, 2007: 20);
 - Develop a national strategy for the recycling of all organic waste;
 - Clarify liability issues surrounding polluted sites, with the aim of applying the polluter-pays principle as thoroughly as possible (OECD, 2007: 20);
 - Build a body of research quantifying and analysing New Zealand's waste output;
 - Continue and broaden education programmes aimed at reducing household flows of waste to landfills;
 - Phase out the use of plastic bags.
21. Energy
- Legislate to ensure new houses are sufficiently insulated;
 - Continue to expand EECA's programme of retrofitting older houses;
 - Introduce a moratorium on new coal power plants, and commit to a process of full public consultation on the building of any such plants in the future;
 - Increase funding for the research and development of distributed generation technology;
 - Review the efficacy of the voluntary Environmental Best Practice Guidelines currently in use for offshore oil exploration, and consider introducing regulations to ensure environmental impacts are accounted for and dealt with;
 - Further incentivise the use of small-scale solar power for homes and businesses;
 - Incentivise the green retrofit industry, e.g. to reduce harmful gases and increase energy efficiencies in household appliances such as fridges.
- Cultural, Social, Education and Health**
22. Education
- Continue to raise the profile of ecological sustainability in the various education curricula, as initiated by the recent New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007).
23. Cultural
- Increase New Zealand's official development assistance so that it is on course to reach the UN target of 0.7% GNI by 2015 – currently it is at 0.3% of GNI (OECD, 2007: 215);
 - Raise the refugee quota from 750 per year to 1000 by 2010, and increase funding of support services accordingly.
24. Health
- Increase the proportion of R&D that is funded on social issues, including Social Impact Assessments from natural resource management practices;
 - Commit the health sector to streamlined, regular and strategic monitoring and reporting on the health of children and young people (Craig et al., 2007: Recommendation 1);
 - Create a single national agency responsible for monitoring child and youth health and implementing a timetable for regular reporting to health authorities (Craig et al., 2007: Recommendation 2).
25. Food
- Review regulations surrounding the artificial sweetener aspartame;
 - Legislate toward the mandatory labelling of food, with regard to country of origin and the presence of genetically modified content;
 - Commit to increasing government support for the transition of farms to organic production, and ensure no barriers exist;
 - Conduct an analysis of food imports;
 - Review the continued use of methyl bromide, a major ozone-depleting substance, to fumigate export forest products and strawberries.
26. Urban Issues
- Develop a coordinated strategy for facilitating sustainable and efficient public transport in Auckland (and associated cities), Hamilton, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin. This could include the following:
 - Commit to a public transport system fuelled by 100% renewable energy;
 - Increase the funding for motorised public transport;
 - Improve bicycle access, including separate cycling lanes;
 - Improve indoor air quality with respect to biological and chemical pollutants (OECD, 2007: 26).
- Governance, Accountability and Transparency**
27. Expand the Companies Register to include mandatory reporting for the year, of (i) significant health and safety issues (e.g. deaths), and (ii) court cases brought by local and regional councils. The register should also include space for voluntary initiatives such as sustainable development reports.
28. Initiate a Royal Commission on electoral reform, including in the terms of reference an inquiry into the Electoral Finance Act.
29. Require all CRIs to undertake sustainable development reporting.

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The McGuinness Institute is a non-partisan think tank working towards a sustainable future, contributing strategic foresight through evidence-based research and policy analysis.
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