

## Section 4

### Sustainable Development Initiatives

Sustainable development is not something that New Zealand has imposed on itself. New Zealand, along with many other countries, adopted the concept and Agenda 21 principles when undertakings were given at the 1992 Earth Summit. Sustainable development is a global initiative to be implemented at national and local levels.

This chapter outlines some sustainable development-related strategies and initiatives underway in New Zealand and elsewhere. By drawing attention to some examples of approaches taken to promote sustainable development and put it into practice, it is intended to highlight the fact that there is support for the concept among a wide range of organisations. Sustainable development can be implemented in a variety of ways that benefit communities, businesses and the environment.

#### 4.1 New Zealand strategies and initiatives

This section discusses a number of examples where aspects of sustainable development principles have, to some extent, been incorporated into legislation, policies and other programmes in New Zealand.

##### 4.1.1 Sustainable development in legislation

The implementation of sustainable development within New Zealand is encouraged and driven by a number of statutes that manage activities affecting the environment. Aspects of sustainability mentioned in statutes are outlined in table 4.1:

Table 4.1 Sustainability in Legislation

### The Environment Act 1986

An Act to— (c) Ensure that, in the *management of natural and physical resources*, full and balance account is taken of –

- (i) the *intrinsic values* of ecosystems; and
- (ii) all *values* which are placed by individuals and groups on the quality of the environment; and
- (iii) the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi; and
- (iv) the *sustainability* of natural and physical resources; and
- (v) the needs of *future generations*.

### Resource Management Act 1991

#### Section 5. Purpose

- (1) The purpose of this Act is to *promote the sustainable management of natural and physical resources*.
- (2) In this Act, “sustainable management” means managing the use, development, and protection of natural and physical resources in a way, or at a rate, which enables people and communities to provide for their *social, economic, and cultural wellbeing* and for their health and safety while—
  - (a) Sustaining the potential of natural and physical resources (excluding minerals) to meet the reasonably foreseeable needs of *future generations*; and
  - (b) *Safeguarding the life-supporting capacity* of air, water, soil, and ecosystems; and
  - (c) Avoiding, remedying, or mitigating any *adverse effects of activities* on the environment.

### Fisheries Act 1996

#### Section 8. Purpose—

- (1) The purpose of this Act is to provide for the *utilisation* of fisheries resources while ensuring *sustainability*.
- (2) In this Act—
 

“Ensuring sustainability” means—

  - (a) Maintaining the potential of fisheries resources to meet the reasonably foreseeable needs of *future generations*; and
  - (b) Avoiding, remedying, or mitigating any *adverse effects of fishing on the aquatic environment*:
 

“Utilisation” means conserving, using, enhancing, and developing fisheries resources to enable people to provide for their social, economic, and cultural wellbeing.

### Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act 1996

#### Section 4. Purpose of Act—

The purpose of this Act is to protect the environment, and the health and safety of people and communities, by preventing or managing the adverse effects of hazardous substances and new organisms.

#### Section 5. Principles relevant to purpose of Act—

All persons exercising functions, powers, and duties under this Act shall, to achieve the purpose of this Act, recognise and provide for the following principles:

- (a) The *safeguarding of the life-supporting capacity* of air, water, soil, and ecosystems;
- (b) The maintenance and enhancement of the capacity of people and communities to *provide for their own economic, social, and cultural wellbeing* and for the reasonably foreseeable needs of *future generations*.

## Energy Efficiency and Conservation Act 2000

### Section 5. Purpose—

The purpose of this Act is to promote, in New Zealand, energy efficiency, energy conservation, and the use of renewable sources of energy.

### Section 6. Sustainability principles—

In achieving the purpose of this Act, all persons exercising responsibilities, powers, or functions under it must take into account—

- (a) the health and safety of people and communities, and their *social, economic, and cultural well-being*; and
- (b) the need to *maintain and enhance the quality of the environment*; and
- (c) the reasonably foreseeable needs of *future generations*; and
- (d) the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi.

## Local Government Bill

### Section 3 Purpose

The purpose of this Act is to—

- (a) establish the role of local authorities in the democratic governance of communities; and
- (b) recognise the diversity of—
  - (i) communities within New Zealand; and
  - (ii) communities of interest within districts; and
- (c) enable local authorities to play a broad role in promoting the *sustainable social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being* of their communities; ...

Some of the key principles of sustainable development are addressed in a variety of ways in these statutes, including:

- management of natural and physical resources
- safeguarding the life supporting capacities of the environment
- taking account of the social, economic, and cultural well-being of communities
- accounting for the needs of future generations.

Those people who are required to implement such statutes or to comply with them are expected to develop an understanding of sustainability. In contrast, a review of statutes affecting social and economic issues reveals that such statutes do not incorporate equivalent principles of sustainability. This implies that sustainable development has been regarded as an ‘environmental’ issue from a legislative point of view.

The most influential statute so far has been the Resource Management Act (RMA), although its focus is on sustainable management (of natural

and physical resources) rather than the broader concept of sustainable development (incorporating environmental, social and economic considerations). The Local Government Bill, currently before Parliament, is intended to address these broader considerations through ‘long-term community plans’ to be developed by local authorities in consultation with their communities.

### *The RMA - asset, impediment or necessary learning curve to achieving sustainability?*

Over the past ten years there has been a tendency to focus on the Resource Management Act as the key (only) tool for implementing sustainable development in New Zealand. Some see this as an impediment because it was not designed to promote sustainable development. Others see the process of implementing the RMA as providing a necessary learning curve, sensitising people to sustainability concepts and thus providing a platform from which we can now broaden out into implementing sustainable development.

As discussed in appendix 2 (section A2.2.1), for a variety of reasons the RMA has not lived up to its potential to contribute to sustainable development in New Zealand. In part, this has been caused by the structure and scope of the RMA itself and in part by how it has been implemented.

There have been difficulties with the interpretation of the key sections and terms of the RMA (PCE, 2001b; Ericksen et al, 2001). The purpose of the RMA (set out in section 5 of the Act), sustainable management, was deliberately more narrowly defined than sustainable development. In theory at least, the pursuit of economic and social goals is left to other mechanisms such as the taxation and welfare systems (MFE, 1997), while the RMA focuses on biophysical environmental management. This distinction reflects the historical context of the time (Young, 2001). Resource management law reform was taking place at the same time as Government embarked on a radical reform agenda centred on a neoliberal and efficiency agenda during the late 1980s and early 1990s. At the same time, a global debate was going on around sustainability and environmental protection. The RMA tends to reflect a compromise between the various perspectives.

The divergent agendas and values have carried through into the implementation of the RMA (Perkins and Thorns, 2001). The tensions between attempts to establish environmental controls and to liberalise economic decision making continue to play out within the context of RMA plan making and consent administration. It is arguable that in the early years of the implementation of the RMA, the Minister for the Environment sought to encourage an interpretation of the RMA primarily based on prescribing environmental bottom lines. By focusing on 'effects' rather than prescriptions, and adopting an environmental bottom line approach, it was intended that precise environmental standards should be developed and adopted. Once such standards were developed, market forces could be left to create the most

efficient use of the resources available. There seems to have been an expectation that environmental standards could be developed separately from political and value considerations (Perkins and Thorns, 2001). Experience suggests this is not the case. However, this particular interpretation may well have had a significant impact on the first generation of plans prepared under the RMA.

In contrast to this interpretation of the RMA, the Environment Court (the principal decision maker on what the Act means) approach has evolved from the environmental bottom line approach to favouring an 'overall broad judgment' approach (Skelton and Memon, 2002). This seems to be a 'weighing' approach which does not necessarily give primacy to any element of section 5 and may incorporate social and economic concerns depending on the facts of the case. The debate over the meaning of sustainable management and how congruent it is with sustainable development therefore continues.

The debate about the meaning of other sections of the Act continues as well, particularly matters of national importance (section 6 of the Act). Sections of the community are resistant to the more protection oriented parts of the Act, arguing their property rights are unreasonably curtailed. This suggests that the community as a whole has not yet bought into the vision, values and kaupapa expressed in the RMA. As Frieder suggests, New Zealanders have "an unusual cultural relationship with change that permits macro changes while it resists micro changes" (Frieder, 1997:53). The law may have changed but many people do not want to change their behaviour or their values.

In the meantime, relatively narrow interpretations of the scope of the RMA have resulted in a separation of social and economic planning from environmental planning in many local authorities. The broader economic and social policy debates are taking place in the context of more general strategic discussions about council

strategic plans, long-term financial strategies and annual plans rather than within RMA district planning discussions. Economic and social policy, in this context, is subject to political values and decision making, depending upon whether it is seen as a core business of local government. While most local authorities are involved in economic growth promotion, there is no consensus among them on the need for social policy (Perkins and Thorns, 2001). However, it could be expected that the Local Government Bill, if enacted in its current form, will assist in promoting sustainable development given that its purpose is to “enable local authorities to play a broad role in promoting the sustainable social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of their communities”. Integration continues to be a challenge.

In addition to the ongoing debate over meaning, there are a number of issues which the RMA and its subsequent implementation does not effectively address:

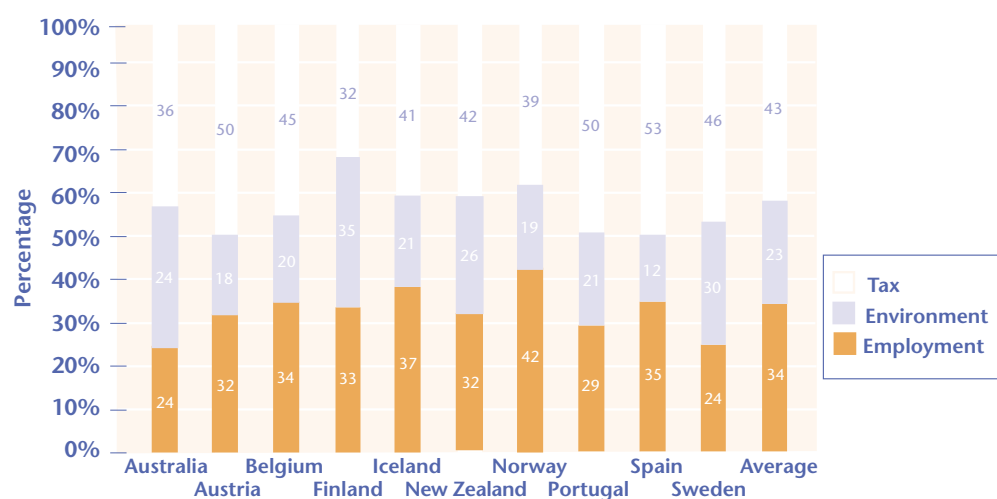
- resource use efficiency issues (PCE, 1998e; PCE, 1998a)
- urban planning (Perkins and Thorns, 2001)
- cumulative effects of land use activities (PCE, 2001d).

In practice, there has been a failure to sufficiently invest in implementation, particularly during the early years following enactment of the RMA. There

has largely been insufficient national guidance in the form of national policy statements and national environmental standards. The focus has been on process, legal requirements and compliance costs at the expense of environmental outcomes (PCE, 2001d). The Ministerial Panel on Business Compliance Costs, appointed in December 2000 as part of a wider strategy to reduce compliance costs, has most recently looked at RMA processes, legal requirements and compliance costs from the perspective of business. The panel found that many of the problems business experience with the RMA appear to be caused by the way councils, resource users and applicants operate, rather than by the law itself and requested that Government support approaches to reducing compliance costs and process delays.

The Government has subsequently approved a policy package addressing these issues (Ministry for Economic Development, 2001b). However, it is interesting to note that a recent OECD report indicates that New Zealand’s environmental regulatory costs are only slightly above the average at 26% of total regulatory costs compared to the average of 23% (see figure 4.1 below) (OECD, 2001f). In summary, the Act has been the focus of such intense debate that some sections of the community seem to have an entirely negative view of it.

Figure 4.1: Distribution of Compliance Costs for Businesses in OECD Countries



Source: OECD (2001f)

Perhaps of most concern is the fact that we do not know what difference the Act has made in terms of environmental outcomes in the ten years of its existence. Most of the implementation resources have gone into writing plans and developing an understanding of what the Act means, and little work has been done on assessing outcomes.

In the broader context of implementing sustainable development, it is arguable that a consequence of the focus on the RMA over the last ten years has been the lack of use of other tools. In particular, economic instruments such as incentives, funds and green taxes have been developed and used successfully overseas but not in New Zealand (see section 3.2.2 environmental taxes).

Despite the issues to do with mandate and implementation, the RMA has moved New Zealand forward. From being in a situation where its environmental management approach was poorly defined, its governmental agencies lacked environmental policy coordination, and effective citizen participation in policy formation was virtually absent (Sumits and Morrison, 2001), it is now in a situation where the need for environmental management is a mainstream concept. From this perspective, the RMA has served as a valuable consciousness-raising tool for issues around the sustainability of natural resource use. It has also highlighted the variety of views and values held by New Zealanders and the complexity of the issues involved in sustainability even if it has primarily been from an environmental management perspective.

Is the RMA an asset, an impediment or a necessary learning curve? Certainly, it has been and continues to be a learning curve. But is it an asset or an impediment? The answer is surely dependent on knowing whether it has promoted the sustainable management of the natural and physical environment. In the absence of any comprehensive outcome evaluation of the Act so far, this remains to be objectively determined.

#### **4.1.2 Sustainable development in central government policies**

The direction that sustainable development takes within New Zealand is influenced to a large extent by Government policies and strategies. The Government has introduced, or has under consideration, a number of strategies and legislation (see figures 4.2 and 4.3) that contribute in some way to aspects of sustainable development. The Government's intention is to draw all these together under an overarching sustainable development strategy. In some cases the links between the individual strategies and sustainable development are not clear because they were not developed with sustainability in mind (see figure 4.4). It would have been more logical to have in place a sustainable development strategy before all other related strategies were considered, so that the links and direction were clear. Nevertheless the production of a series of strategies in the last two years shows great promise for the implementation of sustainable development in New Zealand.

**Figure 4.2: Timeline of Strategies and Programmes Related to Agenda 21**

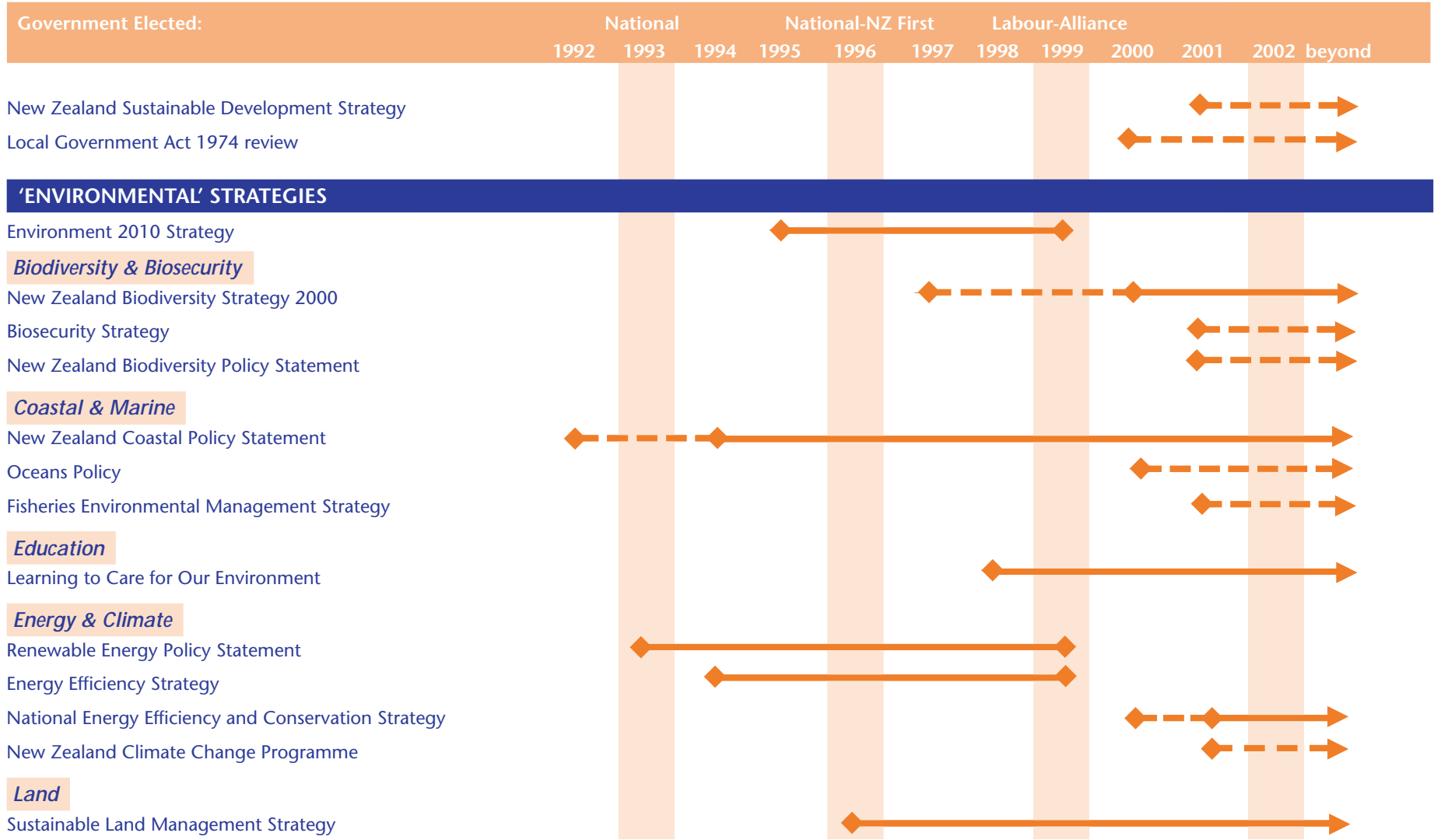
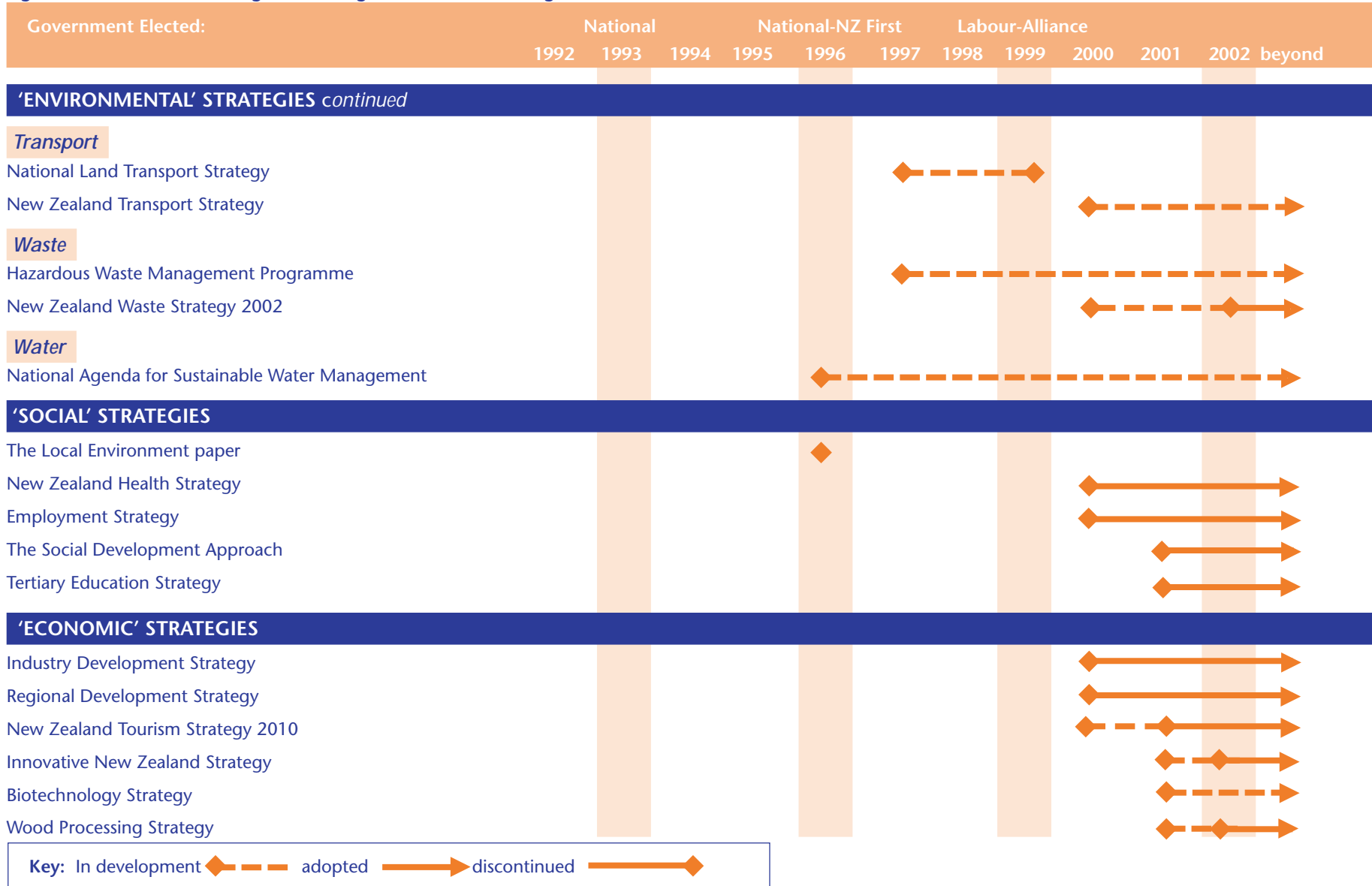


Figure 4.2: Timeline of Strategies and Programmes Related to Agenda 21 *continued*



**Figure 4.3: Environmental Management Legislation and Strategies 1990-2002**

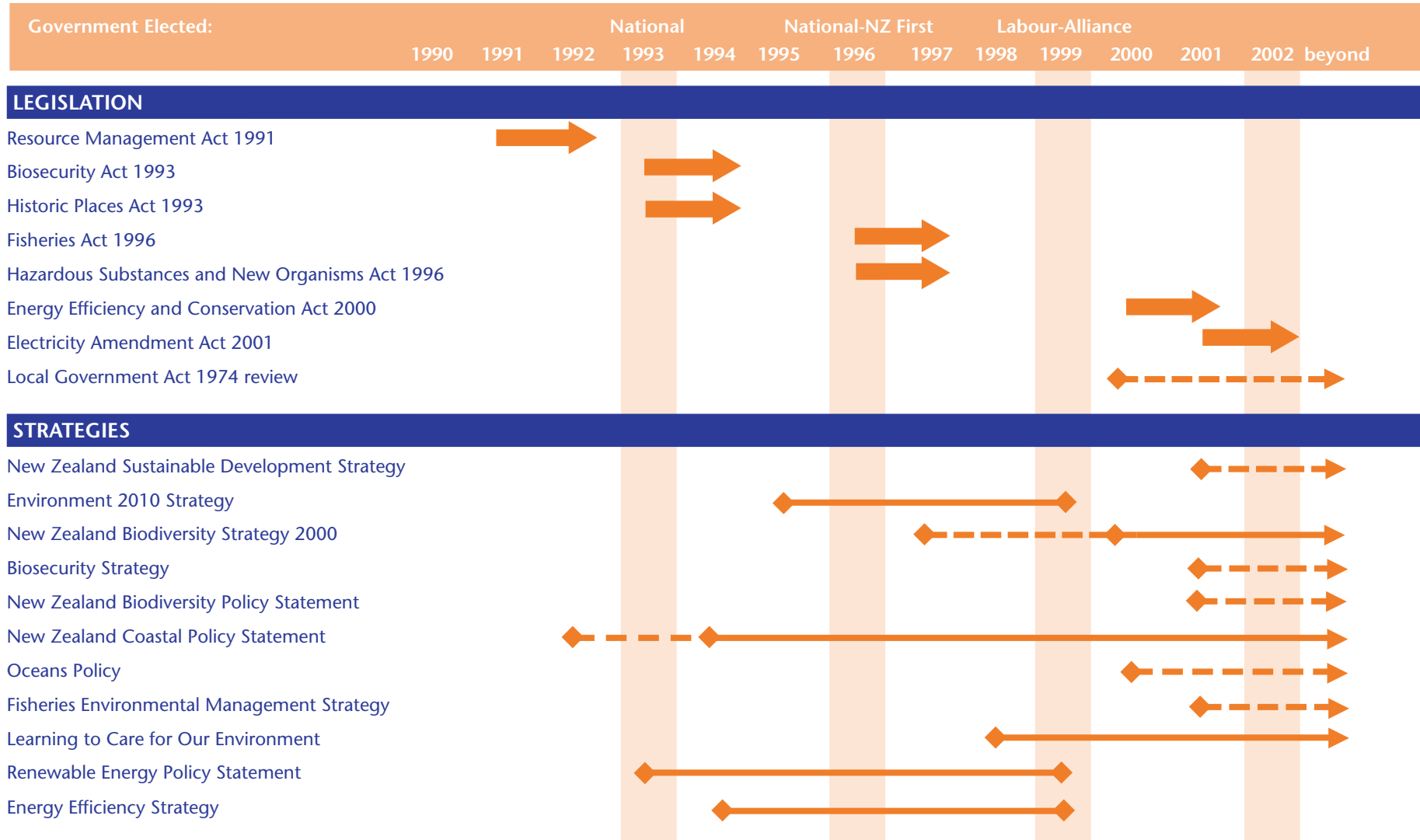
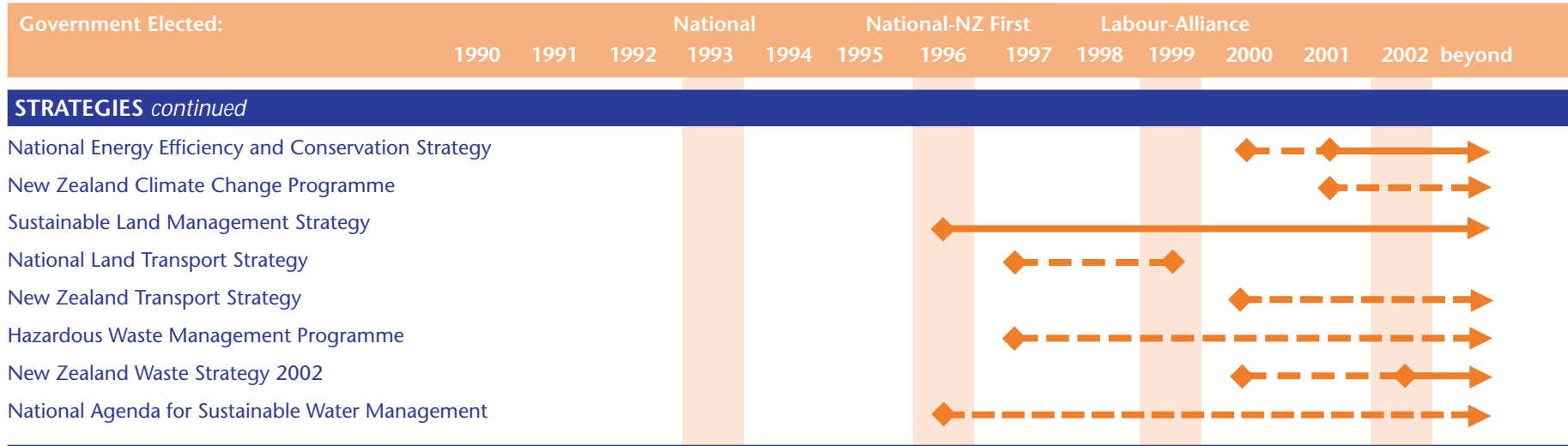


Figure 4.3: Environmental Management Legislation and Strategies 1990-2002 *continued*



**Key:** Legislation  In development  adopted  discontinued 

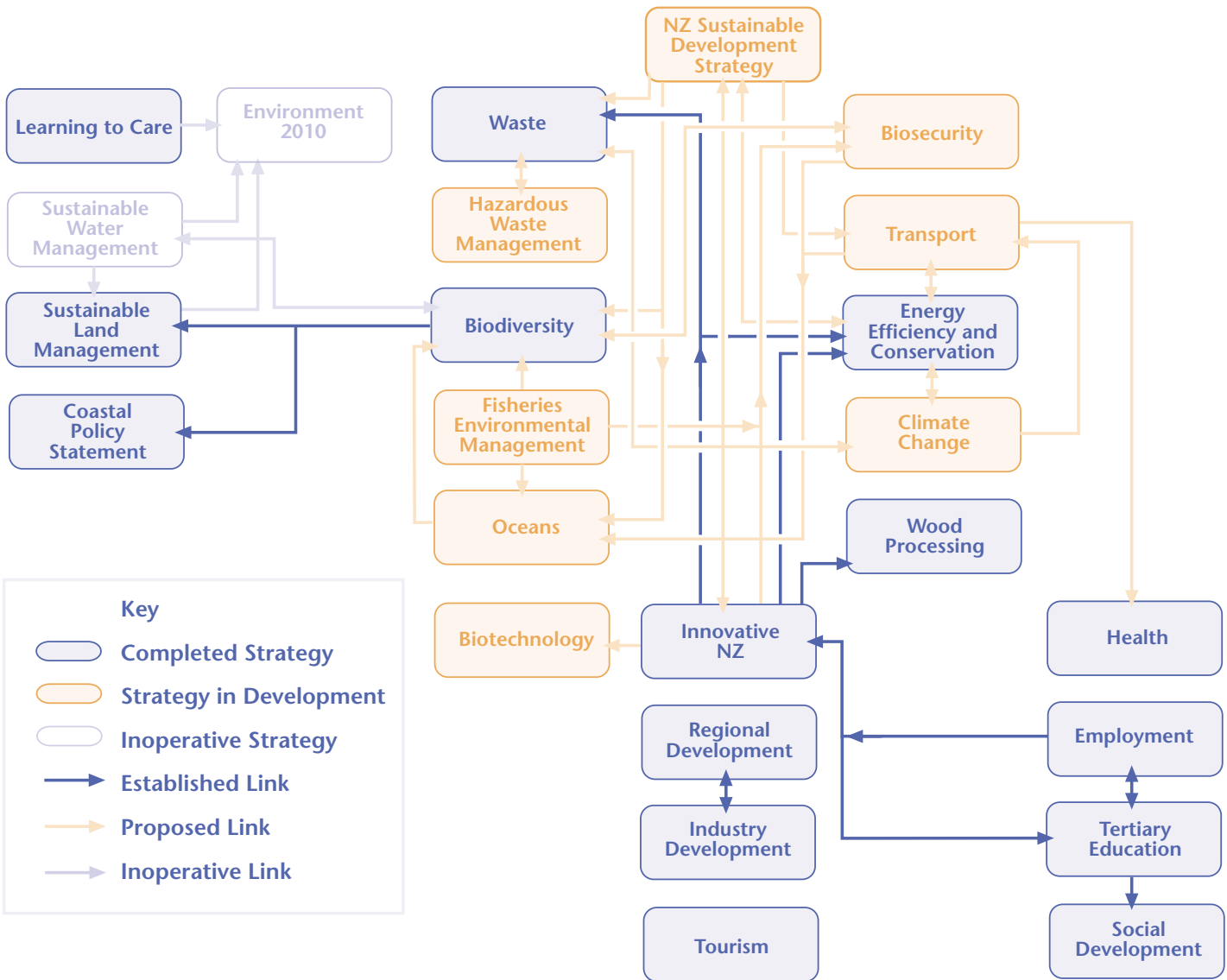


Figure 4.4: Linkages Between Government Strategies

A paper has been prepared, as background to this report<sup>1</sup>, which outlines a range of government strategies that have been developed, or are under development, that are related to sustainable development but that have not necessarily been prepared with this in mind. These strategies are summarised in terms of:

- their purpose or goals
- their relevance to Agenda 21 principles and sustainable development
- targets set
- the agencies responsible for implementing and monitoring the strategies
- the extent to which they have been implemented
- any linkages between the strategies.

Table 4.2 provides a summary of the more detailed information presented in the background paper.

It is clear from this table and figures 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4 that:

- Most of the strategy development activity has occurred since 1999.
- Some strategies have become obsolete due to the lack of any follow-up action plan, or have been merged into other strategies.
- Strategy development does not appear to have followed any over-arching sustainable development goal or plan.
- The linkages between the strategies are haphazard and in many cases linkages that should exist, for sustainable development purposes, have not been made.

The apparent lack of coordination among the various strategies is perhaps indicative of the lack of an overall vision and of the silo-thinking that can occur among government agencies that have not necessarily attempted to integrate their strategies with those of other agencies.

### 4.1.3 New Zealand Strategy on Sustainable Development

Agenda 21 (Chapter 8 - Integrating Environment and Development in Decision Making) encourages governments to integrate environment and development at the policy, planning and management levels. The overall objective is to improve or restructure the decision-making process so that consideration of socio-economic and environmental issues are fully integrated and a broader range of public participation assured.

Prior to 2000 the efforts of successive New Zealand governments to meet Agenda 21 commitments and promote sustainable development have been weak. As discussed in section 4.1.2, the introduction of legislation, strategies and policies related to sustainable development has been slow and largely uncoordinated.

A paper dated 15 May 2000 from the Minister for Economic Development to the Cabinet Committee on Economic Development mentioned that the concept of sustainable development is “consistent with the government’s goals to grow an inclusive, innovative economy for the benefit of all; improve New Zealander’s skills, ... health, education, employment; and protect and enhance the environment.” In a subsequent press release on 14 June 2000 the Minister announced the release of the Government’s new economic and regional development strategies that were to be based on the concept of sustainable development - considered to be a major shift in Government policy away from a narrow focus on short-term economic gain.

It was not until August 2001 that the Prime Minister announced the Government was working on a sustainable development strategy for New Zealand.<sup>2</sup> In her statement the Prime Minister said that Cabinet had agreed the principles of sustainable development should underpin all of the Government’s economic, social and environmental policies.

Table 4.2 Summary of Strategies Related to Sustainable Development

Strategy/ Programme	Status	Refers to SD	Relevance	Targets	Strategy Linkages
NZ Sustainable Development Strategy (SDS)	*	✓	Intends to underpin all environmental, social and economic policies. Draft principles have been set to take account of full environmental, social, cultural and economic opportunities and consequences in making decisions affecting the well-being of current and future generations.	?	(Local Government Bill, Waste, NEECS, Biodiversity, Oceans, Transport)
Local Government Bill	*	(✓)	Recognises the key role of local government to pursue sustainable development.	n/a	n/a
Environment 2010 Strategy	✗	✓	The first attempt to take a strategic approach to environmental issues, based on sustainability principles.	Broad	–
NZ Biodiversity Strategy	✓	✗	Focuses on conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.	Broad	Sustainable Land Mgmt, NZ Coastal Policy, NASWM
Biosecurity Strategy	*	(✗)	Intends to protect environmental, social and economic interests by improving biosecurity management.	?	(Biodiversity, Oceans)
NZ Coastal Policy Statement	✓	✗	Promotes sustainable management of the coastal environment.	Very broad	-
Oceans Policy	*	(✓)	Intends to manage the impacts of human behaviour on the marine environment.	?	(Biodiversity)
Fisheries Environmental Management Strategy	*	(✗)	Intends to manage the effects of fishing on the marine environment. Linked to the Ministry of Fisheries strategic intent to achieve sustainable fisheries in a healthy aquatic ecosystem.	?	(Biodiversity, Biosecurity, Oceans)
Learning to Care for Our Environment	✓	✓	Notes the role of education to achieve local implementation of Agenda 21.	Broad	Environment 2010
National Energy Efficiency & Conservation Strategy (NEECS)	✓	✓	Designed to improve the environmental, social and economic sustainability of energy systems.	Specific	Climate Change, Waste, Transport, SDS
NZ Climate Change Programme	*	(✓)	Focusing on the environmental, social, cultural and economic impacts of a climate change response.	?	(NEECS, Waste, Transport)
Sustainable Land Management Strategy	✓	✗	Highlights land management problems affected by the narrow pursuit of economic and social goals.	Very broad	Environment 2010
National Land Transport Strategy	✗	✗	Notes the need to consider sustainable management of environmental effects relating to land transport.	None	–

Table 4.2 Summary of Strategies Related to Sustainable Development *continued*

Strategy/ Programme	Status	Refers to SD	Relevance	Targets	Strategy Linkages
NZ Transport Strategy	*	(✓)	Intends to integrate environmental, social, cultural and economic goals of the transport sector.	?	(SDS, NEECS, Oceans, Health)
Hazardous Waste Management Programme	*	✗	Hazardous waste management has major implications for environment, social, cultural and economic wellbeing in NZ.	Specific	Waste
NZ Waste Strategy	✓	✓	Wastes can represent significant risks to human health and the environment and represent an inefficient use of resources.	Specific	NEECS, Hazardous Waste Management, Climate Change
National Agenda for Sustainable Water Management (NASWM)	✗	✗	Was designed to set priorities for managing water in a sustainable manner.	None	Sustainable Land Management, Biodiversity, Environment 2010
The Local Environment	✗	✓	Highlights links between a healthy environment and a healthy population.	None	–
NZ Health Strategy	✓	✗	Notes the need to ensure that a healthy environment is achieved.	None	Disabilities, Child Health, Mental Health, Primary Health
Employment Strategy	✓	✗	Promotes employment opportunities but does not consider environmental issues associated with attempts to promote “sustained economic growth”.	Broad	Tertiary Education, Adult Literacy, Disabilities, Early Childhood Education
The Social Development Approach	✓	✗	Promotes cross-sectoral social policies. A desired outcome is to sustain a clean and healthy environment. It does not make any specific linkages.	None	–
Tertiary Education Strategy 2002-07	✓	✓	Connects learning and research with economic and social development goals. Makes some reference to environmental sustainability	Broad	Employment, Social Development, Innovative NZ
Industry Development Strategy	✓	✓	Suggests that industry development is a key component of SD.	None	Regional Development
Regional Development Strategy	✓	✓	Suggests that regional development is about applying SD on a regional scale.	None	Industry Development
NZ Tourism Strategy 2010	✓	✗	Notes the significant role tourism plays in the NZ economy. Highlights environmental and cultural aspects of sustainability.	Very broad	–

Table 4.2 Summary of Strategies Related to Sustainable Development *continued*

Strategy/ Programme	Status	Refers to SD	Relevance	Targets	Strategy Linkages
Innovative NZ Strategy	✓	✓	Designed to foster economic growth. Notes the need to consider social and environmental factors but suggests that NZ's "economic performance has not kept pace with our social and environmental performance" in the past.	None	SDS, NEECS, Waste, Biosecurity, Tertiary Education, Wood Processing, Biotechnology
Biotechnology Strategy	*	?	Intends to balance the risks and benefits of biotechnology in NZ.	?	(-)
Wood Processing Strategy	✓	✗	Designed to accelerate the development of wood processing industries. Likely to have a significant environmental, social and economic impact.	Specific	-

## KEY

- \* In development
- ✓ Implemented/Makes explicit reference to SD
- ✗ Inoperative/Makes no explicit reference to SD
- ( ) To be confirmed (still under development)
- ? To be confirmed (still under development)

Elements of the strategy were to include, among other things:

- a framework for implementing the strategy
- a programme to measure progress towards sustainable development goals
- sustainable development indicators to convey information about progress
- trialling and testing Triple Bottom Line Reporting within Government
- a stocktake of New Zealand's performance with regard to Agenda 21
- initiatives already underway including the development of waste, energy, biodiversity and oceans strategies.

The Government outlined that its commitment to sustainable development, through some key projects and a long-term strategy, was to achieve better results in terms of New Zealand's overall economic, environmental and social well-being. Included in the range of projects was the sharing of information on sustainable development in all sectors and the development of goals and principles to guide government departments in implementing sustainable development.

In February 2002, the Government published a report setting out its framework for growth and innovation (New Zealand Government, 2002). This report focused primarily on the Government's economic objective ("to return New Zealand's per capita income to the top half of the OECD rankings and maintain that standing"), but acknowledged the concept of sustainable development in linking economic policy to social and environmental policy objectives:

*...this government does not believe we can put on hold social and environmental progress, and concentrate solely on economic growth. Implicit in the quality of the growth we are seeking will be integration of the economic, environmental and social pillars of sustainable development. Sustaining a high quality environment, managing the risks to it and implementing efficient resource use policies underpin our competitive advantages as a nation. Managing the environmental pressures from economic growth, while continuing to satisfy human needs will require an integrated effort. (Ibid:12).*

*Not only will social and environmental policy continue to be given high priority in their own right, but the choice of economic policy instruments will be influenced by their interaction with social and environmental factors. Sustainability will be paramount (Ibid;12).*

*Using sustainable development as a filter for policy means that economic policy is not approached in isolation but as part of a bigger picture...Work continues on developing social and environmental indicators to go alongside traditional economic indicators to measure the overall progress we are making (Ibid: 23).*

In May 2002, the Minister for the Environment submitted a paper to the Cabinet Policy Committee outlining the proposals for developing New Zealand's sustainable development strategy. This included a set of draft principles to articulate the Government's approach to sustainable development:

*We will take account of full environmental, social, cultural and economic opportunities and consequences in making decisions affecting the well-being of current and future generations, in the following way:*

- *We will seek to understand and consider the positive and negative long term and short-term impacts across social, cultural, environmental and economic spheres in our decision making.*
- *We will actively seek win-win solutions which maximise net benefit for the environment, economy, social and cultural development, such that gains are mutually reinforcing, rather than assuming or accepting that gain in one area is always achieved at the expense of another.*
- *We will seek to minimise costs and maximise benefits across social, economic and environmental spheres, in particular through separating environmental pressure from economic growth.*
- *We will explicitly address risks and uncertainty in assessing solutions and making choices, and we will take a precautionary approach to decisions that may have irreversible consequences.*

- *We will use the best information available to support making the best possible decisions in a timely fashion.*
- *We will look at the implications of our decisions from a global as well as a domestic perspective.*
- *We will seek to ensure that New Zealand's public institutions value and express diversity and uphold freedom, democracy and participation.*
- *We will work in partnership with other sectors in the pursuit of sustainable development.'*

The focus on developing a national strategy on sustainable development is to be applauded. It is encouraging to see the beginnings of a central government position on sustainable development. This is a significant component that has been conspicuously absent since the Earth Summit in 1992.

#### 4.1.4 Indicators

The development of indicators for sustainability is essential to determine the extent to which we are progressing towards sustainability<sup>3</sup>.

Patterson (2002) carried out a review of indicators that could be used in New Zealand as headline indicators to measure progress towards sustainability. Table 4.3 is a comparison of indicators across eight evaluation criteria used in that review. None of the indicators assessed were considered solely sufficient to measure even ecological sustainability, let alone the social and economic dimensions of sustainable development. The 'green' GDP and a proposed 'composite index of sustainable development'<sup>4</sup> were considered the ones that most adequately reflected all aspects of sustainable development. The Ecological Footprint and the Human Development Index were rated the highest in terms of practicalities (data availability, cost, long-term data available), but had a number of weaknesses.

Patterson's recommendations for an ecological indicator of sustainability were:

- the Ecological Footprint as an easy-to-implement, short-term indicator

- the development of a composite index of ecological sustainability in the longer term.

Two options were recommended for an indicator that encompassed environmental, social and economic aspects:

- 'green' GDP (operationalised by the Genuine Progress Indicator) or
- a proposed composite index of sustainable development.

Clearly, the choice of an indicator, or use of a small set of indicators, to show how well we are performing is not an easy task. Nonetheless, it is an important responsibility of government to develop useful sustainable development indicators for the country. To date, little work on sustainability indicators has been done in New Zealand, but there are promising signs of activity.

Statistics New Zealand is currently working with other government departments to produce a framework for the selection and presentation of sustainable development indicators for New Zealand, as well as a set of headline indicators.<sup>5</sup> This work is part of a package of proposals that will constitute a national strategy on sustainable development. A first draft of sustainable development indicators for New Zealand is to be produced in July 2002, and public consultation on the indicators will occur between July 2002 and February 2003.

The Ministry for the Environment has been working for some time on a set of Environmental Performance Indicators<sup>6</sup> to measure changes caused by various pressures on the environment, and help guide decisions on managing environmental problems. This set of indicators remains incomplete.

#### 4.1.5 Triple bottom line (TBL) reporting

TBL encompasses the three components of sustainable development - economic, social and environmental. Reporting on an organisation's performance in each of these areas is known as TBL reporting. It enables the performance of an organisation to be assessed not only on its

traditional financial achievements, but also on its social and environmental effects.

The Ministry for the Environment received funding in 2000 (through to 2003/04) to encourage and facilitate best practice TBL accounting and reporting in both the public and private sectors.<sup>7</sup>

The key objectives of the Ministry's project within the public sector include:

- increasing participants' understanding of TBL reporting and how it relates to their organisations' responsibilities
- providing a forum for and facilitating a pilot group of government agencies to trial TBL reporting
- documenting the key issues and lessons learnt from the pilot process
- determining the overall value of TBL reporting for government agencies.

This initiative is still at a very early stage and it is too soon to evaluate its effectiveness in relation to sustainable development.

#### 4.1.6 Sustainability research

The Foundation for Research Science & Technology (FRST) funds 'sustainability research' under a number of research portfolios. Currently the sustainability research investments are about \$57 million per year. A FRST review between February and October 2002 will largely focus on future directions for this research under two main components. The first component is 'Sustainable Management' and will consider future directions for sustainability research relating to land-based food and fibre sectors and sustainability across all sectors. It will include the Environmental Protection (land, freshwater and estuaries) portfolio. The second component is 'Sustainable Cities and Settlements' and aims to identify and clarify future directions and stimulate new relationships amongst a range of stakeholders.

Table 4.3 Evaluation of Headline Indicators

	Clarity of Message/ Public Acceptance	Scientific & Theoretical Basis	Timeliness	All Dimensions of Sustainable Development	Performance Criteria	Data Availability	Cost	Long-term Series
Ecological Footprint	XXXX	XX	XXX	X	XXX	XXXX	XXXX	XXXX
Material Flows Indicators	X	XX	XX	X	XX	X	X	X
Environmental Sustainability Index	XXX	XX	XXXX	X	XX	XX	XXXX	XXX
Consumption Pressure Index	XXX	X	XXXX	X	XX	XX	XXX	XX
Living Planet Index	XXX	XXX	XX	X	XX	XX	XXXX	X
European Composite Environmental Performance Index	XX	XXX	XXXX	X	XX	X	X	XX
Weak and Strong Sustainability Indicators (including Genuine Savings)	X	XXX	X	XX	XXX	XX	X	XX
'green' GDP (including ISEW and GPI)	XXXX	XXX	XXX	XXXX	XXX	XX	XXX	XX
New Zealand Deprivation Index	XXX	XXXX	XX	XX	XX	XXX	XX	XXX
Human Development Index	XX	XX	XXXX	XXX	XX	XXXX	XXXX	XXXX
Composite Index of Sustainable Development	XXX	XXXX	XX	XXXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX

Source: Patterson, 2002

**KEY**

Excellent = XXXX  
 Good = XXX  
 Fair = XX  
 Poor = X

#### 4.1.7 Local government initiatives

PRISM and Knight (2000) provide an outline of the adoption of sustainable development and/or Agenda 21 principles by local authorities in New Zealand. This includes details such as:

- Seven territorial authorities have formally adopted Agenda 21: Christchurch, Hamilton, Nelson, Waitakere and Wellington City Councils, and Tasman, Taupo and Waimakariri District Councils.
- 30% of councils either refer to their strategic plans as Agenda 21 documents or refer to Agenda 21 principles and processes in their strategic plans.
- Manukau City is an example of a council that is actively involved in the Healthy Cities programme, that addresses some aspects of sustainability, and has a strong involvement in community and social issues.
- Some councils had not adopted sustainable development principles on the grounds that such issues were regarded as beyond the mandate of the council and that they should keep within their regulatory and statutory functions.

- Waitakere City was held up as a leader in the field of sustainability. The council was quick to adopt Agenda 21 in 1992 and declare itself an 'eco-city'. It has been at the forefront of thinking about sustainable ways to accommodate rapid population growth, and leading regional thinking on this issue. Waitakere City had significant influence on the development of the Auckland Regional Growth Strategy.

The range of activities that councils are involved in are too numerous to outline in detail in this report, but the following examples give some indication of initiatives and achievements undertaken by councils either on their own or in partnership with others:

##### *Christchurch City Council*

- the establishment of the Recovered Materials Foundation, a joint initiative with the waste management sector to investigate and create markets for waste products
- participation in the Redesigning Resources and The Natural Step Pathfinders programme

#### THE CHRISTCHURCH OTAUTAHU AGENDA 21 FORUM

The Christchurch Otagahi Agenda 21 Forum is a Non Governmental Organisation (NGO) that was established after the Rio Earth Summit in 1992. Their objective is to effect change, in subtle and incremental ways, as part of a social trend towards sustainability in New Zealand. Their members are based in organisations across the NGO sector and in tertiary education institutions.

An early project of the forum was to nurture indigenous biodiversity (one of the major themes of the Earth Summit) in Christchurch. Grants from a local Community Board and the Ministry for the Environment supported a scheme to map the historic soils and natural habitats of the city. These were projected onto a present-day street plan to act as a guide for restoration planting. A biodiversity project worker also promoted native planting projects in schools and public places. Meanwhile, the forum has worked with Christchurch City Council to strengthen its native habitat creation in parks, riversides and reserves.

In recent years the forum has hosted public consultations in Christchurch on biodiversity policies for central government. They have also hosted guest speakers from around New Zealand and overseas and established strong connections with students from Lincoln and Canterbury universities. In addition, they have made many submissions on Christchurch City plans to promote social sustainability and ecologically sustainable development and members have become involved with various committees and working groups.

The forum has approximately 40 members who make financial contributions and it is managed by a committee of eight volunteers. Given that they operate without paid staff, on an annual turnover of less than \$1000, the forum believes that it will be difficult to maintain all of their programmes indefinitely. Most of their members have work and family commitments and are involved in volunteer work elsewhere. Nonetheless, they are seeking to maintain and improve their connections and communication skills and to act as a persistent educator and lobbyist in this area.

See Christchurch Otagahi Agenda 21 Forum  
P.O. Box 2657 Christchurch

## THE BIG CLEAN UP

The Auckland Regional Council is trying to involve Aucklanders in a scheme to clean up and improve the state of their local environment. The Big Clean Up project has been developed as a response to increasing pollution and waste problems in the Auckland region.

The project is based on a ten point plan to:

1. encourage people to enjoy and explore the natural environment in the Auckland area
2. promote the need for regular maintenance of their cars to reduce harmful vehicle emissions
3. discourage people from burning rubbish and garden waste to reduce the volume of pollutants in the air
4. help people reduce their consumption by reducing and recycling their waste
5. educate and discourage people from contributing pollutants into stormwater systems
6. promote the planting of indigenous plants in people's gardens
7. encourage people to use their cars less often and to adopt more sustainable modes of transportation
8. support people in their preparations for disasters and emergencies

THE BIG CLEAN UP.  
0800 JOIN IN.



Auckland  
Regional Council  
TE RAUHITANGA TAIAO



Ministry for the  
Environment  
Manatū Mo Te Taiao

9. promote the importance of saving water and power
10. encourage people to become more involved with council planning activities and community groups.

A key component of the project is the use of a questionnaire. Based on their responses to this survey, participants are sent a personalised plan to show how they could help make Auckland a cleaner place to live. Participants are also sent a set of vouchers for discounts on native plants, 'environmentally friendly' products and other goods and services.

This scheme is also linked with educational resources provided to teachers in the area. The Auckland Regional Council is trying to involve as many people as they can in the project, based on their desire to make it as easy as possible for people to work towards a better environment. By May 2002, over 27,000 people had joined them in their efforts to help the Big Clean Up.

See <http://www.arc.govt.nz>

- employing a member of staff with responsibility for advising the council on sustainability issues and coordinating the council's progress towards being a sustainable city
- adopting Triple Bottom Line Reporting format in the council's next (2002/03) annual plan.

### *Waitakere City Council*

- soon after adopting Agenda 21 in 1992, the council produced its strategic plan or 'Greenprint', combining social, environmental and economic goals and objectives
- a strong emphasis on community involvement in seeking solutions to socio-economic issues, managing urban growth, waste and other sustainability issues
- applying 'soft' engineering solutions to tackling stormwater issues (e.g. using natural vegetation rather than more expensive pipeworks to dispose of stormwater)
- producing a bi-annual well-being report assessing quality of life for Waitakere residents.

### *Manukau City Council*

In consultation with a wide range of stakeholders within the community, the council published a report (Manukau City Council, 2001) outlining a vision for the city to 2010. It includes a section on 'Sustainable Manukau' which sets out long-term goals and targets, the actions necessary to achieve those goals and targets, and identifies the agencies that will be responsible for leading those actions. Action leaders include local and central government agencies and private businesses. The challenge will be to maintain the alliances needed to achieve long-term goals.

### *Quality of life in New Zealand's six largest cities*

In 1999, the Auckland, Christchurch, Manukau, North Shore, Waitakere and Wellington city councils undertook a joint study to establish indicators of social well-being in these cities. They accommodate around 40% of New Zealand's population. The project grew to include economic and environmental indicators to enable

monitoring of whole quality of life. This resulted in the publication of a report (Auckland City Council, et al., 2001). It concluded that the quality of life in New Zealand's six largest cities is affected by many inter-linked factors. To achieve quality of life and ensure sustainable development in urban environments, the report pointed out that a wide range of social, economic and environmental issues (e.g. population growth and socio-demographic factors, housing issues, health status, educational achievement, and pollution control) must be considered alongside each other, rather than as separate matters to be dealt with in an isolated fashion. This will require key sectors working together in new forms of partnerships.

Among other things the report identified as the next steps, the need to work with central government on some of the issues of concern to the six cities. It also recommended that measuring quality of life should become a regular exercise contributing to the development of more effective partnerships.

#### *Local Government New Zealand (LGNZ) initiative*

LGNZ established a Sustainable Development Project Team in late 2001 to support and help build capacity in local government to engage in sustainable development. It also assists LGNZ provide advice and input to the Government's sustainable development initiatives. Part of the LGNZ programme includes preparing a local government 'statement on sustainable development'. The team's tasks to help build capacity include:

- input to the implementation programme for the new Local Government Act
- work on a best practice toolkit for sustainable development
- a local government sector strategy for sustainable development
- establishing networks to share ideas on sustainable development among local authorities.

#### **4.1.8 Other initiatives**

Throughout this report there are examples of sustainable development initiatives undertaken by business, iwi and community groups.<sup>8</sup> They provide a useful indication of the variety of initiatives that are occurring around the country, and the types of changes that are being sought or achieved through putting into practice the principles behind sustainable development. The examples cover:

- local community-based initiatives (Agenda 21 Forum in Christchurch)
- nationwide community projects (Zero Waste)
- development based on ecological principles (Earthsong housing development and the 'eco-hospital' projects in Waitakere City)
- a business initiative (Macpac and 'The Natural Step')
- triple Bottom Line reporting (Landcare Research)
- an iwi initiative (Ngai Tahu's 'mountains to the sea' approach to managing catchments)
- application of Natural Capitalism (Redesigning Resources programme in Christchurch)
- socially and environmentally responsible investment (the Global Responsibility Investment Fund)
- public involvement in improving local environmental quality (Auckland Regional Council's 'Big Clean Up' project)
- international moves towards sustainable energy (Green Energy purchasing initiatives).

Goldberg (2001) produced a comprehensive list of about 120 current activities that support environmentally sustainable business initiatives. It covers local government, the private sector (including business, environmental consultancies, industry associations) and NGOs. The list includes activities such as:

- support for eco-business (eg eco-tourism)
- eco-labelling initiatives
- quality assurance and certification programmes that include environmental sustainability

- programmes to support waste minimisation and eco-efficiency.

About half of the activities on the list are in the category of 'information dissemination and exchange', and around 20% are categorised as 'promotion of environmental management systems'. District and city councils are responsible for about 26% of the activities listed in the database, followed by community associations (24%) and industry associations (19%). Central government only make up about 3% of activities.

## 4.2 International initiatives

### 4.2.1 Questions of governance

This section looks briefly at the initiatives some other countries have taken with respect to sustainable development. A particular issue it examines is the question of 'governance' - the systems and structures of government - since these have a central role in shaping the relationships between the public and government as well as relationships between different parts of

government. The material draws on a recent OECD report (OECD, 2002) that studied governance for sustainability in five OECD countries - Canada, the United Kingdom, Japan, Germany and the Netherlands.

The OECD report recognised that sustainable development is typically a 'cross-cutting issue' requiring consideration of economic, environmental and social aspects before making decisions. The report identified this as a challenge for policy integration, especially when the evolution of modern states "...has been towards an increasing degree of sectoral specialisation, in order to respond more effectively to complex and differentiated problems." Countries have tended to respond to this challenge by either building new institutional frameworks, or by using their existing practices for policy development and decision making to address sustainable development goals. Either option presents significant challenges for policy integration.

### GREEN ENERGY PURCHASING INITIATIVES

A growing number of public agencies overseas are agreeing to purchase more of their energy from renewable sources. They are also being joined by many individuals and businesses who want to ensure that their energy demands are met in a sustainable way. For example:

- In the United States, the city of Chicago and 48 government agencies signed a contract in June 2001 to purchase 10% of their electricity from renewable sources. This figure is due to increase to 20% in 2007. Meanwhile, the city of Salem began to source all of its energy from wind and hydro sources in 1996.
- In the United Kingdom, several universities have signed agreements to buy between 30% and 40% of their energy from 'green' power sources.
- In the Netherlands, 5% of the population has signed agreements with suppliers to receive all of their energy from renewable sources.
- In Germany, many large corporations are buying all of their energy from sustainable sources.
- In Australia, 60,000 residential customers and 2,5000 commercial enterprises derive their energy from renewable supplies.

Public policy interventions have been integral to the success of many of these programmes. Such policies can be used to make 'green' energy more cost-effective when compared to more conventional energy supplies. Thus, energy supplied from renewable sources in the United Kingdom is exempt from a climate change levy enacted in April 2001. Likewise, green energy is exempt from energy taxes in the Netherlands and Germany.

Meanwhile, in the United States, there has been more emphasis placed on education in this area. Many consumers are also given the option to pay a premium on their electricity prices which supports the construction of new renewable energy supplies. In states such as Colorado, this demand is fuelling investments in wind farms as a new source of energy.

These approaches highlight some of the ways in which countries are attempting to pursue a more sustainable energy future. In addition, green energy purchasing plans are being supplemented with energy efficiency and conservation initiatives to reduce the demand for energy. New energy developments are also being carefully managed so that their environmental impacts can be minimised. See <http://www.earth-policy.org>

The OECD report suggested that choosing a ‘comprehensive’ approach, as did Canada and the United Kingdom, requires a country to have the capacity to spread a coherent message to all public agencies and to ensure that they respond appropriately. Using the existing practices and structures to promote sustainable development also implies an oversight capacity through effective steering mechanisms. The risk is that, if it is not well managed, unfocused efforts lead to ineffective actions and a culture of ‘talking rather than acting’.

The usual alternative, to set up new institutions to foster integration, can lead to resistance to such agencies from established departments, which see the ‘newcomers’ as ‘overstepping their boundaries’. In Germany and the Netherlands concrete achievements have come from an approach that focused on environmentally sustainable economic development. This has been supported by a clear distribution of responsibilities as well as clear enforcement responsibilities in the environment ministries. One outcome has been the creation of a sense of leadership. Paradoxically, however, through the strong linkages of the notion of ‘sustainability’ with environmental matters it has made it more difficult for the notion of ‘sustainable development’ to be extended and linked to social and economic influences on development.

#### ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISMS FOR GOVERNMENTS

Canada has developed comprehensive evaluation and accountability mechanisms for sustainable development. In 1995, amendments to the Auditor General Act created the position of Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development,<sup>9</sup> appointed by, and reporting to the Auditor General. The Commissioner’s mandate is to make the Government accountable for greening its policies, operations and programmes. One of the Commissioner’s main functions is to monitor and report on federal progress in implementing sustainable development strategies. The same 1995 amendments require 28 government departments and agencies to draw up sustainable development strategies. These strategies are to be updated every three years and are

evaluated by the Commissioner who reports annually to Parliament. (OECD 2002).

The OECD report also identified an issue that was mentioned by many of the people interviewed for this report. Namely, new challenges that have a high level of complexity often require making choices for the longer term, along with a capacity to sustain commitments over time. Public sector institutions have difficulties with long-term time frames since the frequency of electoral cycles provides a strong incentive to focus on short-term issues. The OECD report was referring to electoral cycles of ‘about 5 years’.

The common problems across the countries surveyed were:

- the difficulties of integrating policies across government (the need for horizontal (within central government) and vertical (central to local government) integration)
- the importance of improving interactions between government and society
- the need to create a long-term view within governments to respond to inter-generational issues.

#### 4.2.2 The Dutch Experience

*Trust and honesty are the glue that holds together Dutch environmental policy [reflecting] a conscious choice... that government, business and environmentalists need to stand shoulder to shoulder on progressive environmental management.* Dagmar Timmer, Resource Renewal Institute 1998.

A densely populated country with four times the population of New Zealand, but only 15% of its land area, the Netherlands has devoted considerable time, energy and intellect to working out how to better manage its environment and economy. The outcome has been instructive to many other countries who see the ‘Dutch experience’ as providing useful, workable models for bringing together government, business, citizens and activists to work out long-term deals aimed at achieving sustainable development. The process has been an evolutionary one, as opposed

to revolutionary change. Central to that evolution has been the extension of lessons learned during the development of the Dutch National Environmental Policy Plan (NEPP) to broader national debates on sustainable development issues (de Jongh and Captain, 1999).

De Jongh and Captain (1999) identify five key elements of cooperative environmental management that are also applied to sustainable development initiatives. They are:

- Integrate environmental responsibilities into society as a whole.
- Provide clear information, backed by science.
- Recognise policy as a process with many different actors playing critical roles.
- Frame the debate in terms acceptable to all participants.
- Work for long-term continuity in policies.

Over the last decade the attitude of the public in the Netherlands towards the environment has moved from 'protecting nature' to 'caring for tomorrow'. This moves it closer to the concept of sustainable development. "As in other OECD countries, there is no ministry in charge of sustainable development; nor is this wished." (OECD, 2002). Instead, the 13 equally-ranked Ministries in the Netherlands Government have a number of environment-related functions allocated between several of them.

It was notable failures of the regulation-led, compliance approach that led the Netherlands to try new instruments for developing environmental policy. Since the early 1990s, the focus of decision making has been on developing shared visions and mechanisms for cooperative implementation. The development of the covenant system, i.e. negotiated agreements, has become a central policy tool of new cooperative management practices. They are the key elements for the implementation of the NEPPs for the private sector. Defined by legislation and Cabinet regulations, covenants can be negotiated on an industry-wide, a sector-specific, or a plant-specific basis. Hence they can involve either central or local government.

Covenants reflect the management approach of the Environment Ministry, namely, Government sets the vision, but relies on the various social sectors to work out the details and implement it. The Ministry has found that success depends on three elements:

1. A supportive public - achieved through education projects and extensive public awareness campaigns.
2. Groups able to help define the Government's vision - achieved by including the private sector and organisations in discussions and debates, and by funding NGOs.
3. Building a solid foundation of respected scientific data - achieved through increased government support for the RIVM. This is a scientifically autonomous institute that produces annual reports on the state of the Netherlands' environment and the success and failures of environmental policy. This feedback contributes to reviews of the NEPPs.

Decentralisation of decision making has also been seen as helpful in achieving policy goals for sustainable development. There is a need for getting the balance right, however, and the need to make sure that decentralisation is accompanied by specific attention to integration across levels of government.

#### ACHIEVING SUCCESS FOR CONSULTATIVE PROCESSES

In the Netherlands, success of the consultative processes for national environmental policies have been attributed to the following four main criteria:

- The government provides a credible argument for change based on solid scientific consensus, such that both private sector and public stakeholders believe in the benefits of the process and the strategy.
- Government recognises that industry involvement in both the creation of policies and solutions encourages industry participation in the success of the strategy. Long-term success requires each participant to accept personal and corporate responsibility for the solution.
- The success of the process rests on continuity. This means industry can sustain its operations while reducing its emissions and the ability of local government to monitor and organise its efforts.
- Each sector needs to secure benefits and recognise concessions of the other parties. (OECD 2002).

### 4.2.3 Local Agenda 21 initiatives

Chapter 28 of the Agenda 21 document calls on local authorities to work with their local communities to achieve a local action plan, a Local Agenda 21. This process recognises the role local communities have to play in shaping their own future and it is an attempt to empower local communities in the decision-making process.

The International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) has surveyed the extent to which local authorities have made formal commitments to Local Agenda 21 initiatives.<sup>10</sup> Surveys in 1997 and 2001 have tracked a dramatic, three-fold surge in Local Agenda 21 activities in all regions of the world in the last few years (Commission on Sustainable Development, 2002). By December 2001, over 6,400 local authorities in 113 countries had either made a formal commitment to Local Agenda 21 or were actively undertaking the process.<sup>11</sup> The greatest participation level overall is in Europe. Almost 100% of Swedish local authorities are engaged, which reflects a strong national campaign. Similarly, in the UK a strong level of support and guidance from the Government has meant that over 90% of local authorities have now produced Local Agenda 21 documents.

#### UNITED KINGDOM INITIATIVES AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

In the UK the Local Government Act 2000 led to the incorporation of Local Agenda 21 activities on sustainable development into other initiatives. This Act requires all municipalities to complete Community Plans for the social, economic and environmental well-being of their area and also for sustainable development in the UK. The current challenge is to ensure that local authorities genuinely pursue sustainable development through their community plans and they build on the work and the networks that have already been established.

(Commission for Sustainable Development, 2002)

The survey also explored the focus of activities and concerns of Local Agenda 21 processes. The results were that, overall, environmental processes (46%) and sustainable development (36%) were

well ahead of narrower economic development (14%) and social (7%) activities. This suggests that many local authorities were classifying activities as 'sustainable development' that were not addressing all three of its components. Priority issues varied between high- and low-income countries, while the only issue that was equally ranked by all countries was management of water resources. "Water resources management may refer to water quality, conservation, or availability - issues faced by municipalities all over the world." (Commission on Sustainable Development, 2002).

Despite the great differences in cultures, governance structures and development levels, the survey highlighted a number of issues and messages that are relevant to New Zealand as well as to other countries. Key messages in the report were:

- **Political commitment by central government and financial support are key factors to the implementation of Local Agenda 21.** Their absence was recognised worldwide as key obstacles regardless of national income level. The same point emerged in the 2002 OECD report referred to above.
- **Create national policies that strengthen the ability of local government to advance sustainable development.** Local governments look to their central government to create the policy environments that support their work. This includes having fiscal frameworks that support their abilities to respond effectively to community priorities. The report emphasised the importance of re-evaluating perverse subsidies and local funding mechanisms.
- **National support programmes need to recognise the diversity of local conditions and circumstances.** One size does not fit all. Central government support should follow extensive consultation and community analysis at the local level to return the best progress on meeting needs and developing effective action plans.
- **The development of locally relevant mechanisms to monitor and evaluate progress needs to be supported.** Regular

assessments of progress against objectives are needed by local governments while central governments need to understand the degree to which local communities are responding to national priorities.

- **Support the development of country-wide Local Agenda 21 campaigns.** The report concluded “National campaigns, endorsed and financed by the national government, have continued to propel the growth of Local Agenda 21 activities.” Important synergies can be created. Local governments can be important players in promoting national programmes. And local governments, even in the absence of national campaigns, can play strong coordinating roles.

#### LOCAL AGENDA 21 IN PRACTICE

##### PERU - CITIES FOR LIFE

In 1996, two cities started the ‘Cities for Life Forum’ as an offshoot of an urban environmental best practices project. With little government support it has now grown to 15 city-level Local Agenda 21 processes. The Forum includes Peruvian municipalities, universities, NGOs, and private sector representatives. The Forum has also improved the understanding of critical environmental problems facing vulnerable populations and improved the capacity to deal with them. Key factors to its success include political support from city mayors, large-scale and ongoing public participation, as well as the success of specific projects and action research studies.

##### EUROPEAN SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND TOWNS CAMPAIGN

In 1994, the first European Sustainable Cities and Towns Conference in Aalborg, Denmark, led to the European Sustainable Cities and Towns Campaign. It also produced the Aalborg Charter, which outlines a commitment to pursue sustainable development at the local level through Local Agenda 21 and similar programmes. Over 1,300 European municipalities have now signed up to the Aalborg Charter and joined the Campaign with its commitment to sustainable development, making it the largest regional campaign for local sustainable development. An alliance of five organisations works to provide training, information and resources to the municipalities involved in the campaign, which is also promoted through regional conferences.

(Commission for Sustainable Development, 2002)

### 4.3 Key points

- A number of recent ‘environmental’ statutes in New Zealand have incorporated the concept of sustainability. This is not the case with social and economic-related statutes, indicating that sustainable development may be perceived as only relevant to environmental decision making.
- The contribution that the RMA has made to sustainable development in general, and sustainable management of natural and physical resources in particular, is difficult to determine in the absence of any outcome evaluation since the RMA was enacted.
- Acceptance of sustainable development by central government has, until relatively recently, been slow in New Zealand compared with many other OECD countries. It was not until August 2001, some nine years after the Earth Summit, that the Government announced its intention to produce a national strategy on sustainable development. Meanwhile, significant efforts have been made by local government and business and community groups in New Zealand to implement the principles behind sustainable development within their respective sectors.
- The Government has introduced, or has under consideration, a number of strategies and policies that contribute in some way to aspects of sustainable development. The intention is to draw all these together under an overarching sustainable development strategy. In some cases the links between the individual strategies and sustainable development are not clear because they were not developed with sustainability in mind. It would have been more logical to have had in place a sustainable development strategy before all other related strategies were considered, so that the links were clear. That said, the proposed development of a strategy for sustainable development and other strategies that incorporate sustainability shows great promise for the future in New Zealand.
- Successful implementation of sustainable development initiatives among other OECD countries has been the result of efforts to gain

public support, and achieve good coordination and integrated decision making. Having the commitment and the capacity to focus efforts towards actions over long-term timeframes has also been a major factor.

- In some OECD countries, such as the Netherlands, environmental management systems have evolved and broadened to cover sustainable development. Key elements of the evolution were the failure of compliance approaches leading to a focus on developing shared visions and mechanisms for cooperative implementation.
- Local Agenda 21 initiatives can be effective means for implementing sustainable development. Support and guidance from central government is also important to ensure that local authorities take up the challenge in ways that achieve national as well as local goals.

<sup>1</sup> The background paper, associated with this report, on government strategies can be found on the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment's web site: <http://www.pce.govt.nz/>.

<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.mfe.govt.nz/new/pages/questions.html> for the Prime Minister's announcement, and <http://www.liveupdater.com/labour/LiveArticle.asp?ArtID=93106551> for the more detailed proposal to develop the New Zealand Sustainable Development Strategy.

<sup>3</sup> A background paper, associated with this report, on the evolution of indicators can be found at the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment's web site: <http://www.pce.govt.nz/>.

<sup>4</sup> A recommendation in Patterson (2002) for an index consisting of environmental, social and economic sub-indices, all of equal weighting.

<sup>5</sup> Further information can be obtained from the Statistics New Zealand web site: <http://www.stats.govt.nz/>.

<sup>6</sup> Further information can be obtained on the environmental indicators web site: <http://www.environment.govt.nz/>.

<sup>7</sup> The Ministry for the Environment contributed funding to the New Zealand Business Council for Sustainable Development (NZBCSD) to produce a report on how eight businesses went about working towards TBL reporting. A copy of the report is available on the NZBCSD web site at: [http://www.nzbcscd.org.nz/\\_attachments/casestudies.doc](http://www.nzbcscd.org.nz/_attachments/casestudies.doc).

<sup>8</sup> These examples are for illustrative purposes only. Their use in this report does not necessarily mean that they have been endorsed by the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment.

<sup>9</sup> The website for the Canadian Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development is [www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/domino/oag-bvg.nsf/html/environment.html](http://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/domino/oag-bvg.nsf/html/environment.html).

<sup>10</sup> The website for the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives is [www.iclei.org](http://www.iclei.org).

<sup>11</sup> This reportedly includes 37 councils in New Zealand.

