



# See Change

Learning and education for sustainability

*Background Paper 2:*

## *Government strategies related to education for sustainability*

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## Introduction

This document provides background information for the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment's (PCE) report *See Change: Learning and education for sustainability*. It examines the extent to which central government strategies consider the role of education to promote sustainable development.<sup>1</sup> It also considers how well these strategies are linked together.

This background paper supplements the analysis of strategies in the main report. Readers are also advised to refer to the discussion on strategies in the following pages of *See Change*:

- *Sustainable development programme of action (2003)* – page 52
- *Education priorities for New Zealand (2003)* – page 53
- *Learning to care for our environment (1998)* – page 53
- *Tertiary education strategy (2002)* – page 77 and Background Paper 4.

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<sup>1</sup> Consistent with the main report, the emphasis in this background paper is on the *environmental* dimensions of sustainability.

## Overview of strategies

The government has produced a range of strategies in the environmental, social and economic areas. *Table 1* provides an overview of key strategies and the links they make between education and environmental sustainability. They have been grouped into the following columns:

1. **Identifies role / provides direction:** strategies that identify a clear role for education to promote environmental sustainability *and* highlight how education should be implemented.
2. **Identifies role / no direction:** strategies that make links between education and environmental sustainability, but do not identify how education for sustainability should be implemented.
3. **Does not identify role:** strategies that do not identify any role for education to promote environmental sustainability.

**Table 1: Overview of government strategies**

Identifies role / provides direction	Identifies role / no direction	Does not identify role
Biodiversity	Biosecurity	Biotechnology
Climate change	Oceans (in development)	Early childhood education
Energy efficiency and conservation	Tertiary education	Employment
Learning to care		Growth and Innovation
Waste		Health
		Industry development
		Regional development
		Sustainable development programme of action
		Social development
		Tourism
		Transport

*Table 2* provides more detailed information on each strategy and comments related to education for sustainability. Strategies have been marked with a tick, cross or question mark (if they are still under development) to identify:

- whether they acknowledge an important **role** for education to promote environmental sustainability (R)
- whether they provide any **direction** for implementing education for sustainability (D).

**Table 2: Comments in government strategies regarding education and sustainability**

<i>Strategy</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>Comments</i>
<b><i>Biodiversity strategy</i></b>	✓	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognises education as a key tool to achieve national and regional biodiversity goals.</li> <li>Comments that there “is a need to recognise and ‘mainstream’ biodiversity concepts in broader environmental education programmes and to make biodiversity information relevant to people’s local environments, that is, to enable people to connect biodiversity with their places and how it contributes to their lifestyles” (page 101).</li> <li>Acknowledges that existing education programmes and activities are not necessarily well coordinated, integrated or most effective.</li> <li>Includes an objective to expand and enhance education about biodiversity (page 103) and actions to integrate biodiversity issues into the environmental education strategy <i>Learning to Care</i>; to assist Maori in identifying their education needs; and to promote the role of environmental education in the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.</li> </ul>
<b><i>Biosecurity strategy</i></b>	✓	✗	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Notes that the biosecurity system needs to have “Good education and awareness programmes to encourage compliance with biosecurity rules and regulations and strong enforcement of our biosecurity laws” (page 10).</li> <li>Promotes the use of greater public participation and social marketing for biosecurity management.</li> </ul>
<b><i>Climate change programme</i></b>	✓	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A key element of the policy package for this programme is the development and implementation of a public awareness programme on climate change.</li> <li>It states that “Building public awareness of global warming, the resulting climate change and the role of greenhouse gases will be a necessary first step towards building a broader, long-term programme of public education. Ultimately, the aim is to guide and assist New Zealanders to take actions to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions” (page 10).</li> <li>It plans to use advertising, promotions, community education and ‘partnership programmes’ with local government organisations, educators and business groups.</li> <li>It aims to be co-ordinated with the <i>Energy Efficiency and Conservation strategy</i> and the <i>Transport and Waste strategies</i>.</li> </ul>
<b><i>Learning to care for our environment</i></b>	✓	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Notes that “There is an increasing appreciation that we all have a part to play in protecting and sustaining the environment. Environmental education is the key to providing people with the knowledge, awareness, attitudes and values that will assist them in this task. Environmental education is not just a priority for school children, it must be a lifetime commitment for all of us” (page 3).</li> <li>Monitoring was to be implemented through regular reviews of the <i>Environment 2010 strategy</i> (now obsolete).</li> </ul>

**Table 2: Comments in government strategies regarding education and sustainability**

<i>Strategy</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>Comments</i>
<b>National energy efficiency and conservation strategy</b>	✓	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>States that “Creating understanding of energy impacts and actions at all appropriate levels throughout the community is fundamental to developing a sustainable energy future” (page 16).</li> <li>Includes policies to develop educational resources and approaches to improve understanding of energy issues.</li> <li>Includes key measures for information in schools and wider public education.</li> <li>Suggests that education will also be used to support changes in the transport sector.</li> </ul>
<b>Oceans policy</b>	?	?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Still under development.</li> <li>Includes a vision that “New Zealanders understand marine life and marine processes and, accordingly take responsibility for wisely managing the health of the ocean and its contribution to the present and future social, cultural, environmental and economic well-being of New Zealand.”<sup>2</sup></li> <li>During consultation for the Oceans Policy there was a strong call for more general education about the marine environment as a way of enhancing personal levels of responsibility.<sup>3</sup></li> </ul>
<b>Social development approach</b>	x	x	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Although not a strategy <i>per se</i>, this report sets out a way of thinking about social policy across government.</li> <li>It identifies a conceptual framework for cross-sectoral social policy, with desirable social outcomes that include “All have the knowledge and skills that provide the opportunity to participate fully in society. Lifelong learning and education are valued and supported. New Zealanders have the necessary skills to participate in a knowledge society and to become global citizens”; and “A clean and healthy environment is maintained, sustaining nature, and meeting the needs of people now and in the future” (page 6).</li> </ul>
<b>Sustainable development programme of action</b>	x	x	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Government’s key document for presenting the “way forward” for sustainable development.</li> <li>Includes a vision that New Zealanders will “Cherish our natural environment, are committed to protecting it for future generations and eager to share our achievements in that respect with others” (page 9) but does not make any reference to education for sustainability.</li> <li>Makes some reference to general education skills, such as access to education services and the need to build a knowledge economy.</li> </ul>

<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.oceans.govt.nz/policy/> [accessed May 2003]

<sup>3</sup> See New Zealand Government. 2001. *Towards an Oceans Policy for New Zealand – Report on consultation undertaken by the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Oceans Policy*. Wellington: New Zealand Government.

**Table 2: Comments in government strategies regarding education and sustainability**

<i>Strategy</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>Comments</i>
<b>Tertiary education strategy</b>	✓	✗	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highlights a need to develop research and skills in the areas of biodiversity, biosecurity, climate change and landuse patterns to maintain a 'clean green' image.</li> <li>States that "As we move into the twenty-first century, New Zealand faces significant environmental challenges at both the national and international level. The large majority of our community remains unaware of the ecological impact of humans on our environment" and that it is important to "help all New Zealanders develop an awareness of the environment and the impacts economic and social activities have on it – here we can also draw from Maori community traditions of environmental management" (page 13).</li> <li>"Cultural and environmental awareness" is highlighted as one of 20 'high level generic skills' desired (but categorised under interpersonal skills).</li> <li>Although environmental sustainability is highlighted as a national objective, it does not feature in 35 objectives for action – see page 77 of <i>See Change</i> and Background Paper 4.</li> </ul>
<b>Transport strategy</b>	✗	✗	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>States that "negative local and global environmental effects of transport will be reduced through education, regulation, technology and investment" (page 42) but does not expand on the role of education.</li> <li>The major emphasis is on road safety education.</li> </ul>
<b>Waste strategy</b>	✓	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establishes a role for central government to facilitate public information and education programmes on waste.</li> <li>Includes a major focus on providing information.</li> <li>Highlights a difficulty in getting ongoing funding for waste reduction research, education and implementation.</li> <li>Emphasises a need to raise awareness about waste, while providing consistent messages about waste issues.</li> <li>Includes clear targets, including some for information and communication.</li> </ul>
<b>Other strategies</b>	✗	✗	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The <i>Biotechnology strategy</i> focuses on skills in science and fostering public awareness about the benefits of biotechnology. According to the strategy, support will be given to produce resources for the school curriculum (while encouraging companies to do the same), which will also address ethical issues.</li> <li>The <i>Tourism strategy</i> mentions the importance of raising awareness of tourism, with the intention of ensuring that "communities must be encouraged to embrace tourism" (page 30).</li> <li>The <i>Growth and Innovation Framework</i> considers education as a means to build a knowledge economy.</li> </ul> <p>Other government strategies that do not make any references to education for sustainability include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Early childhood education strategy</i></li> <li><i>Employment strategy</i></li> <li><i>Health strategy</i></li> <li><i>Industry development strategy</i></li> <li><i>Regional development strategy</i>.</li> </ul>
<b>KEY</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>D</b>	<p>Acknowledges an important <b>role</b> for EE / EfS.</p> <p>Provides some <b>direction</b> for implementing EE /EfS.</p>

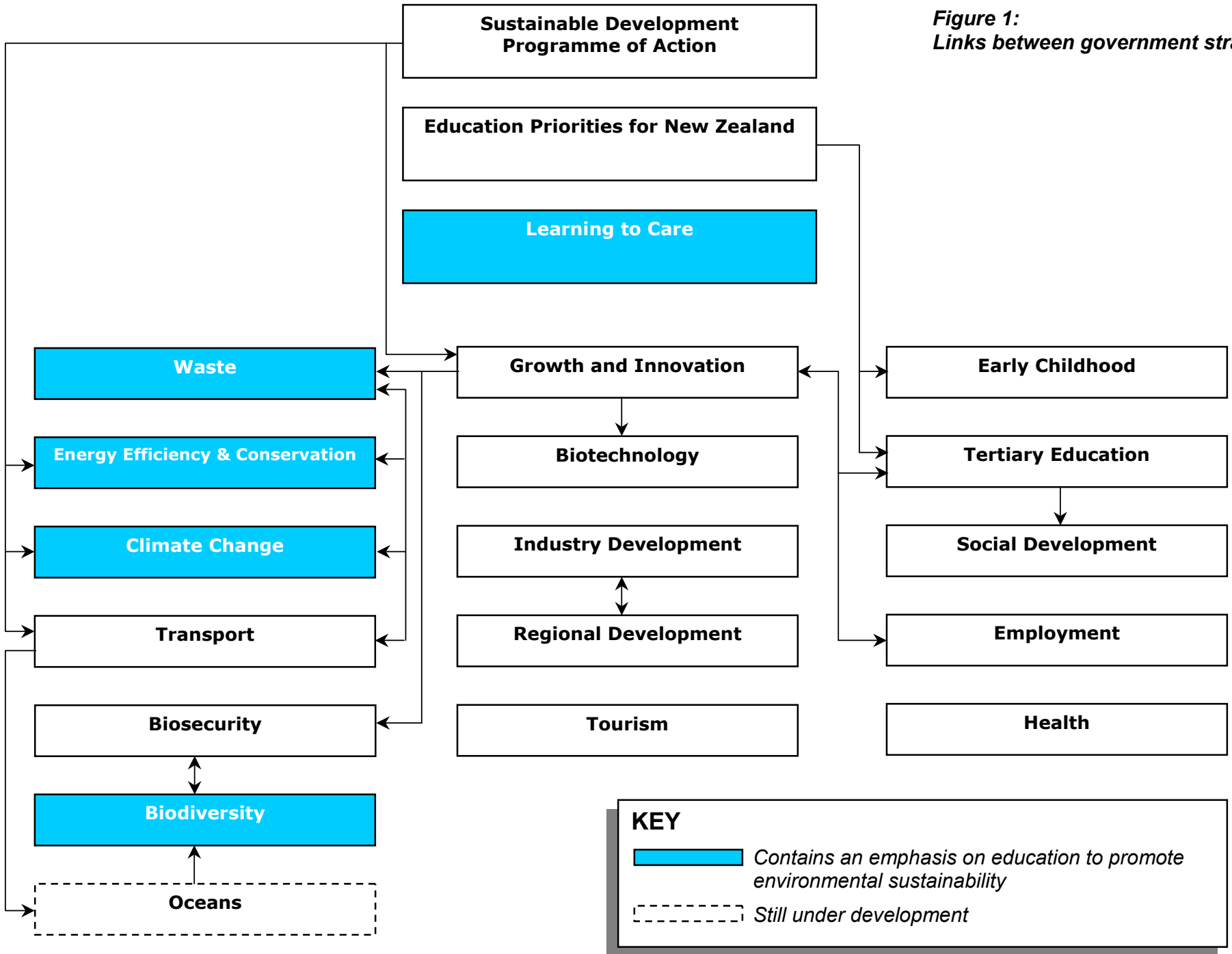
### ***Links between government strategies***

Many of the strategies in the table above identify a role for education to promote sustainability. A key theme during research for *See Change* was that government agencies need to work together to provide coherent messages to the public. However, as *Figure One* suggests on the following page, many strategies have been developed in isolation from each other. This diagram identifies the explicit links made between government strategies in the education and sustainability areas. An arrow between two strategies means that a link has been made between them (either one-way or both ways). No attempt has been made to analyse the strength of these links – they may merely mention the name of another document. Strategies in shaded boxes have the strongest emphasis on education to promote environmental sustainability.

*Creating Our Future*<sup>4</sup> also highlighted a widespread lack of co-ordination between government strategies. There are therefore many opportunities for government agencies to work together to promote education for sustainability.

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<sup>4</sup> See PCE. 2002. *Creating Our Future: Sustainable development for New Zealand*. Wellington: PCE, pages 96-106; and PCE. 2002. *Creating Our Future: Background paper – government strategies*. Wellington: PCE.



**Figure 1:**  
*Links between government strategies*



## References

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