



Engineers New Zealand

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WELL-ENGINEERED STRATEGIES NEEDED FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME TO WORK

The Programme of Action on Sustainable Development of New Zealand released today is an excellent step in the right direction according to Gerry Coates, Deputy President of the Institution of Professional Engineers New Zealand, but the next stages must be carried through with a high level of commitment for the Plan to succeed.

"The difficulty so far in lowering our demands for fossil fuels shows that well-engineered implementation policies and strategies must be developed without delay. Under-utilised cleaner technologies exist, and what is needed is the resolve to use them. We do not want to look back in ten years and find that the pressure for business as usual has swamped our resolve for change."

"Engineers may well be the key profession for the success of the Programme. I'll be focussing on how technology underpins any moves toward sustainability during my term as President later this year", Mr Coates said.

On the Government's programme proposals, he says: "Engineers are crucial to achieving the actions required on three of the four issues highlighted – water quality and allocation, energy, and sustainable cities. We also have a major part to play in ensuring that children are aware of what being sustainable means in practical terms. They also need the science and technology skills to participate in building a future sustainable society.

Improvements in the efficient use of energy and water are essential, according to the Government's document. "Engineers design the industrial plants that process our primary produce – the dairy and forestry outputs – so we have a duty to make sure that our projects are as efficient as possible". This also means educating clients who may be less aware of the new possibilities or environmentally sustainable techniques.

The proposed increase in the supply of renewable energy to New Zealand from the present 29 per cent to 31 per cent by 2012 will also require innovative local technology. Mr Coates also congratulated the government for having signalled its commitment to a transition to renewable energy beyond 2012 – "Engineers have the skills and knowledge to help establish the timetables and targets for this."

Cities are engines of economic growth, but the document points out that they compete with each other for scarce resources. On the plus side, however, they are also capable of demonstrating sustainable principles on a micro-level. The proposed "urban design charter" needs to be expanded to become a "sustainable cities charter" setting out the Government's and urban local authorities' aspirations as to how an ideal city should develop.

Mr Coates noted the absence of any stated intention to encourage environmental or civic education for the up-coming generation of future workers. "It will also be essential for these children to be technologically literate if they are going to carry on the progress towards sustainability", he says. In addition they needed to know at a deep level why it was necessary. This requires them to learn about the principles of a world with finite resources.

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