

Pursuing sustainable development proving a complex problem

The partnership between central and local government towards building a sustainable nation is at present 'messy' and 'clumsy', according to latest research from Sustainable Future.

The independent sustainability think-tank has just released its latest research report as part of *Project 2058*, a two year research project aiming to promote long-term thinking and leadership in sustainable development.

The report, *Supporting Local Government: Existing Initiatives for Sustainable Development*, is a stocktake of central government initiatives relating to the creation of sustainable development strategies, policies and programmes, all of which may impact on local government.

Sustainable Future's chief executive, Wendy McGuinness, says the research found that New Zealand is in the early stage of developing a national approach to the complex problem of sustainable development.

"However, the research shows the partnership between local and central government is currently best described as tackling wicked problems, coping with messy processes and accepting clumsy solutions," she says.

Mrs McGuinness says Sustainable Future believes three things need to happen in order to move forward.

"Firstly, local government should become more actively involved in central government initiatives," she says.

"Secondly, central and local government should prepare a National Sustainable Development Strategy, as recommended by the United Nations, to outline how the vision of a sustainable nation can become a reality."

And Mrs McGuinness says thirdly, individuals and organisations carrying out central government initiatives should continue to seek the involvement of local government and the wider community.

The report finds that central government activities designed to support local government initiatives provide an opportunity for councils to engage in and shape the emerging landscape in order to create an effective approach for the future.

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