

# Sustainability Matters

17<sup>th</sup> August 2017

A fortnightly selection of topical **news and views** about economic, social and environmental issues.  
Designed especially for accountants and those who use the services of accountants.

## Sustainability Matters is;

- Compiled and published by Ray Skinner of *Sustainability Matters*, providers of specialist services relating to sustainability and business support. **Business achieving a tomorrow for tomorrow's children.**

## How Can New Zealand Transition To a Low Emissions Economy?

"The Productivity Commission has published an issues paper for the inquiry into New Zealand's transition to a low emissions economy.

"Moving towards a low-emissions economy will require significant changes for New Zealand businesses and households.' says Murray Sherwin, Chair of the Commission.

"This inquiry will investigate what sort of changes are needed and how we can transition while still growing our economy and improving the wellbeing of all New Zealanders.'

"The issues paper is structured into four main parts – key issues for New Zealand as it looks to reduce emissions; opportunities and barriers to reduce emissions; policy and institutional arrangements required for a low emissions transition; and ensuring a transition that continues to grow incomes and wellbeing.

"Climate change is one of the most serious issues we face. How New Zealand responds to its international commitment to reducing GHG emissions will have major implications for our future.' says Mr Sherwin.

"The issues paper is a crucial part of our inquiry process. It gives the Commission the opportunity to share what we know so far and to ask questions about important areas where more information, thought and discussion is required. We encourage anybody with an interest to read through the paper, think about the questions and participate by making a submission.'

"The issues paper and details about how to make a submission are on the Commission's website.

"The **closing date for submissions is 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2017**. The Productivity Commission's final report to the Government is due on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2018.

**More:** [www.productivity.govt.nz/news/how-can-new-zealand-transition-to-a-low-emissions-economy](http://www.productivity.govt.nz/news/how-can-new-zealand-transition-to-a-low-emissions-economy) Terms of reference and issues paper (92 pages 1.27Mb) at [www.productivity.govt.nz/inquiry-content/3254](http://www.productivity.govt.nz/inquiry-content/3254)

**Source:** *Carbon News*, 10<sup>th</sup> August 2017. ❖

## Extracting and Processing Iron Sand within the South Taranaki Bight: Marine Consent Application

"On 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2017, the Decision-making Committee (DMC) granted consent subject to conditions for Trans-Tasman Resources Limited (TTRL) to extract and process iron sand within the South Taranaki Bight.

**More:** [www.epa.govt.nz/EEZ/whats-going-on/current-applications/ttr-2016/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.epa.govt.nz/EEZ/whats-going-on/current-applications/ttr-2016/Pages/default.aspx) plus [www.stuff.co.nz/business/industries/95546761/ttr-ironsand-mining-decision-approved](http://www.stuff.co.nz/business/industries/95546761/ttr-ironsand-mining-decision-approved) and decision [3.96Mb 368 page] [www.epa.govt.nz/EEZ/EEZ000011/TTRL\\_Marine\\_Consent\\_Decision\\_EEZ000011\\_FINAL\\_version.pdf](http://www.epa.govt.nz/EEZ/EEZ000011/TTRL_Marine_Consent_Decision_EEZ000011_FINAL_version.pdf)

**Source:** EPA, 10<sup>th</sup> August 2017. ❖

## SUSTAINABILITY GROUP EVENTS

Next event – Date of webcast yet to be 'sorted'.



Announcements in 'due course'. ❖

## ESG Reporting – Six Reasons Why

"The corporate reporting of sustainability data – call it ESG, or environmental, social, and governance data – has come a long way. Only 20% of Fortune 500 companies reported ESG data in 2011. By 2016, according to the Governance and Accountability Institute, only 20% failed to report. More than 10,500 organisations have created almost 40,000 separate sustainability reports, according to the Global Reporting Initiative. The Bloomberg terminal now includes more than 700 different ESG disclosures from nearly 12,000 companies.

"This information flood has produced interesting market insights, but it is also becoming clear the value of ESG reporting does not reside entirely in the output of data. The very process of gathering this data and integrating it into management practices can create operational and economic benefits beyond those determined by investor valuation. ESG-related efficiency and performance improvements can impact intangible brand value, enterprise risk management, and product and service innovation. ....

"While ESG factors are often seen as non-financial performance indicators, the ways in which a company tracks, measures, and manages them undoubtedly has financial consequences. The very term 'non-financial' is a misleading one, because ESG information is relevant and measurable. If investors are attracted to a company, and own the stock longer, due to ESG performance signals, that has a real financial impact. But the subtle values that sustainability can provide, as we detail below, may also be just as measurable.

...

**More:** <http://cfi.co/finance/2017/06/evan-harvey-nasdaq-esg-reporting-six-reasons-why/> links to [www.sustainability-reports.com/evan-harvey-nasdaq-esg-reporting-six-reasons-why/](http://www.sustainability-reports.com/evan-harvey-nasdaq-esg-reporting-six-reasons-why/)

**Source:** CSEAR, 27<sup>th</sup> June 2017, page 9. ❖

## Fraud – a [NZ] Perspective

"Metiria Turei recently started a conversation about what it is like to live on the benefit in our country. But instead of a discussion about the policies that could actually improve the lives of the poorest people in our country, we've had a relentless media focus on Metiria herself and almost no coverage on the billions we lose each year to tax cheats.

"We need to shine a light on the real problem, which is not solo mums on the benefit, but wealthy elite tax cheats robbing our schools and hospitals for their personal gain. ....

"Here are some facts for perspective: In one year the Government spent nearly \$50 million on benefit fraud investigations, uncovering \$24 million lost and only recovering \$5 million.

"At the same time, tax fraud investigations uncovered \$1.24 billion lost, spent \$169.77 million trying to get it back and recovered \$362.8 million.

"Put another way, for every dollar we spend on investigating welfare discrepancies, we get \$0.09, and for tax fraud, we get \$6.07!

"If you were the Minister of Finance or Revenue, where would you focus your efforts? Let's help voters focus their efforts too.

**More:** <https://donate.actionstation.org.nz/taxfraud>

**Source:** ActionStation, 14<sup>th</sup> August 2017. ❖

## A New New Zealand First

"Aldrin Thayalakal recently became the first person in New Zealand to complete the SASB (Sustainability Accounting Standards Board) FSA Credential examinations.

"Based in Auckland since late 2016 Aldrin is an Associate Partner at Endeavour Capital. He also holds an MA in Economics and is a member of CPA (USA) and CFA.

"The FSA Credential is designed for professionals who benefit from understanding the link between material sustainability information and a company's financial performance. The majority of test takers are professionals in investment analysis, consulting, and sustainability.

"The Sustainability Accounting Standards Board sets industry-specific standards for corporate sustainability disclosure, with a view towards ensuring that disclosure is material, comparable, and decision-useful for investors. It works in conjunction with IASB, IIRC and GRI among others.

"Aldrin has specialised in identifying sustainability topics and designing indicators which are industry specific to company. Management or mis-management of these topics can have substantial impacts on the on the risks and opportunities for companies. He also feels the channel of impact on the 'operations' or 'financial condition' of the company should be defined.

**More:** <http://fsa.sasb.org/> plus <https://www.sasb.org/> and <http://ecap.co.nz/people/aldrin-thayalakal/>

**Source:** Aldrin Thayalakal, 7<sup>th</sup> August 2017. ❖

## How A Surge in Visitors is Overwhelming America's National Parks

"Jim Robbins reports on how the growing crowds in U.S. National Parks are increasingly becoming unmanageable, threatening both the ecosystems the parks were created to protect and the natural experience they were intended to provide. Park attendance this summer is shattering records, with veteran administrators reporting 'greenlock' – gridlock in natural surroundings – in marquee parks such as Yellowstone, Grand Canyon, and the Great Smoky Mountains. In Utah's Zion National Park, the problem has gotten so severe that officials are considering requiring reservations to get into the park and to go on some of the most prized hikes.

**More:** <http://e360.yale.edu/features/greenlock-a-visitor-crush-is-overwhelming-americas-national-parks>

**Source:** *Yale Environment 360*, 4<sup>th</sup> August 2017

**Editor:** NZ Inc is heading for this scenario too? See 'stunning' photo of Half Dome Yosemite; like Ruapehu Crossing on steroids. ❖

## Carbon Offset Schemes in NZ

"Carbon offset schemes may ease your conscience. But how do you know they aren't just smoke and mirrors? We explain how they work, compare 4 voluntary schemes, plus provide tips on how you can reduce your carbon footprint.

"..... The idea behind carbon offsetting is to invest in projects that represent a sufficient reduction in emissions to balance out the activity you're doing. For example, you could offset the 7 tonnes of greenhouse gases from an Auckland-London return flight by planting a forest big enough to vacuum up all those emissions.

"Offsetting schemes aim to compensate for carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) and other key greenhouse gases. Each offset, also referred to as a carbon credit, represents one tonne of carbon dioxide equivalents (CO<sub>2</sub>e).

"Personal air travel has been a focus of carbon offset schemes. In addition to CO<sub>2</sub>, jet engines leave behind other emissions including water vapour from contrails, which add to the greenhouse effect via a process called 'radiative forcing'. Some calculators use a radiative forcing multiplier to take this into account.

"What on earth is an offset? ....

**More:** <https://www.consumer.org.nz/articles/carbon-offset-schemes> Sign in might be required.

**Source:** *Consumer*, 5<sup>th</sup> August 2017. ❖

## GRI Rises to Sustainability Standards Challenge

[The following is an extract from a dialogue.]

"**Skroupa:** With the fragmentation of the market for various organisations providing different sustainability reporting methods, what is your belief in regards to the perceived competition?

"**Mohin:** This is one of the questions I have received most often since joining GRI back in January. The 'competition between sustainability reporting methods' narrative is a popular one within the sustainability media. Stories about conflict are common in the media because frankly stories about collaboration and organisations working together are not that interesting. The reality though is that GRI works together with almost all other players in this field. We have longstanding collaborations with the UN Global Compact, IIRC, CDP, and ISO to name only a few.

"We have also broken new ground in collaboration with SASB and are working on next steps to align our standards. So when you take a look behind the scenes, the competition narrative falls apart, but this does not mean that the fragmentation is imagined. It is real. There is genuine confusion in the market about how the various reporting frameworks are related to one another and their respective value propositions. It is incumbent upon all sustainability reporting organisations to communicate clearly about how and why companies should use their products. Dispelling this notion that we are competing with one another and promoting harmonisation among frameworks is one of my top priorities.

"**Skroupa:** Given your impact on global markets, what do you see in the future of GRI?

"**Mohin:** I am currently in the process of finalising strategic plans with the GRI Board of Directors so it is a bit premature to say too much. What I can say is that the harmonisation efforts between reporting frameworks is an important focus area for me. I want GRI to work to help companies and their stakeholders get more out of the investment in sustainability reporting. We need to work with investors to make sure that they are receiving decision-useful information from sustainability reports. To be clear, investors are not the only audience for sustainability data and I am not suggesting that the practice should be reduced to only the issues and concerns of investors. Still, we cannot deny the reality that investors have tremendous power to influence corporate behavior. So it is in the interest of all stakeholders that we work to make sure that investors are actually using sustainability data. Finally, GRI will continue working to help build capacity to evaluate and report on sustainability impacts around the world. We need to engage with small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs) to help them report on their sustainability impacts, as they are responsible for around 90% of global economic activity. To that end we are currently pilot testing an application of GRI Standards for SMEs in Colombia, Ghana, Indonesia, Peru, South Africa and Vietnam. Once we have completed the pilot phase we plan to make this tool available to everyone.

**More:**

[www.forbes.com/sites/christopherskroupa/2017/07/05/gri-rises-to-sustainability-standards-challenge](http://www.forbes.com/sites/christopherskroupa/2017/07/05/gri-rises-to-sustainability-standards-challenge)

**Source:** GRI, 10<sup>th</sup> August 2017. ❖

## Fewer People Think Continued GDP Growth Necessary or Possible

"Changes in technology are enabling our modes of living to be perceived visually better. At the same time, though, changes in people's sense of values are transforming the times almost imperceptibly.

**More:**

[www.japanfs.org/en/news/archives/news\\_id035841.html](http://www.japanfs.org/en/news/archives/news_id035841.html) plus

[www.japanfs.org/en/news/archives/news\\_id035130.html](http://www.japanfs.org/en/news/archives/news_id035130.html)

**Source:** CSEAR, 27<sup>th</sup> June 2017, page 19. ❖

## 'World-first' Lawsuit Against Bank Over Climate Change Risks

"Two shareholders have lodged a world-first lawsuit against one of Australia's big four banks, Commonwealth Bank, because it failed to mention climate change risk in its annual report last year.

"Lawyers from Environmental Justice Australia have filed proceedings in the Federal Court on behalf of shareholders Guy and Kim Abrahams, with the case expected to test how companies should disclose information about climate change risks in their annual report.

"Reuters Newsagency reports the claim alleges that by not disclosing the risks posed to its business, the bank failed to give a true and fair view of its financial position and performance, as required by the Corporations Act.

"The shareholders also claim the 2016 directors' report did not adequately inform investors of climate change risks.

"They want an injunction to stop the bank making the same mistake in future annual reports.

"The action also raised concerns about the risks, including reputational risks, to the Commonwealth Bank if it funds Indian conglomerate Adani's controversial Carmichael coalmine project in Queensland.

"Green groups have been targeting the bank over its potential financing of the coal project and have called on it to rule this out. ....

**More:** <http://econews.com.au/55059/world-first-lawsuit-against-bank-over-climate-change-risks/>

**Source:** *eco-News*, 8<sup>th</sup> August 2017. ❖

## Company Wants 10,000 Electric Bikes on Auckland Streets

"An Auckland company says electric bikes are the ideal solution to the traffic gridlock plaguing the city.

"Big Street Bikers aims to have 10,000 electric bikes on the streets by 2020. The firm's plan is to offer annual leases to companies around Auckland for their branded bikes, promising fleet management software, regular servicing, on-call courtesy bikes and safety training.

"Companies can be doing a lot more to help solve our transport problem. With car parks in the central city costing up to \$60 a day, a \$30/week bike subsidy for staff is a no-brainer", Big Street Bikers director Matt Weavers said.

"They're cheaper than the bus, faster than the traffic and most importantly much better for your booty", he said.

"The company claims to already be in talks with some of New Zealand's largest employers.

"Greater Auckland deputy chairman Patrick Reynolds agreed with the concept, 'E-bikes, not e-cars or driverless cars, are the truly transformational urban transport technology of our age because they have the power to radically change the shape, performance, and economies of cities everywhere.'.....

**More:**

[www.nzherald.co.nz/business/news/article.cfm?c\\_id=3&objectid=11898181](http://www.nzherald.co.nz/business/news/article.cfm?c_id=3&objectid=11898181)

**Source:** Malcolm Rands, *Facebook* like 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2017. ❖

## How an Urban School's Garden Project Healed a Community

"And finally here's a story designed to inspire. Stephen Ritz is a relentlessly positive teacher from South Bronx in New York who introduced gardening and plants into the curriculum. His trick is to engage students in learning, through the growing of fruit and vegetable, and the development of worm farms and butterfly gardens. The cool thing about this is that he has changed the school and changed the kids in it, giving them hope of what the future can hold. In the process his school graduation rate has increased from 17% to 100% and attendance rates to 93%.

**More:** [www.greenbiz.com/article/how-urban-schools-gardening-project-healed-community](http://www.greenbiz.com/article/how-urban-schools-gardening-project-healed-community)

**Source:** Ian Challenger, 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2017. ❖

**The Book:** *The Power of a Plant: A Teacher's Odyssey to Grow Healthy Minds and Schools*, 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2017. ❖

## Groundwater Fees Prompt Farmers to Slash Water Use by a Third

"When it comes to drought and the farming community, it seems a self-imposed fee on groundwater could work better than government regulations, according to a new study from the University of Colorado Boulder. The study suggests self-imposed well-pumping fees can play an important role, incentivising farmers to slash use by a third, plant less thirsty crops and water more efficiently.

"The study centred around an initiative in Colorado's San Luis Valley, where several hundred farmers voted to self-impose a fee on groundwater – which is typically free and largely unregulated – beginning in 2011. The move came after a historic drought in 2002 and subsequent drier-than-average years left the region's aquifer depleted and some farmers worried that the state might begin shutting down wells, as it had in other areas.

"Historically, farmers have relied primarily on surface water from streams and runoff, but as population growth and climate change have strained supplies, agriculture has grown increasingly reliant on water pumped from underground.

"The new fee, now at \$75 per acre foot of water, is among the first in the nation. About 700 farmers who manage 170,000 acres are subject to the fee. Proceeds are used to help local irrigators buy supplemental surface water or to pay them to let their acreage go fallow, or unused, in dry years.

"The study drew upon five years of data from farmers inside and outside the fee district before and after it was implemented. It found farmers subjected to the fee pumped 32% less water per year on average. Some switched to less water-intensive crops. Others upgraded to more water-efficient irrigation equipment. Notably, some did not reduce their water use at all and instead opted to pay extra.....

**More:** [www.environmentalleader.com/2017/06/groundwater-fees-prompt-farmers-slash-water-use-third/](http://www.environmentalleader.com/2017/06/groundwater-fees-prompt-farmers-slash-water-use-third/)

**Source:** *Environmental Leader*, 24<sup>th</sup> June 2017. ❖

## Technology and Morality in the Age of Climate Change, Overpopulation, and Biodiversity Loss

"A lot of us have a love-hate relationship with technology. We love the conveniences and comforts gained with each new development, and hate how they might impact our health and real-world relationships.

"But even when we question the personal impacts of modern technology, how many of us consider the other, less visible ways, our dependence on technology might be harming us? How many of us question the belief that technological advances will save us from our most pressing environmental and societal challenges?

"Most people will instinctively disagree with that characterisation – 'of course, I don't think that technology can fix everything!' – but that doesn't change the reality that, collectively, this is precisely how we're behaving.

"It's time to think even more deeply about our relationship with technology.

"In his latest work, *#NoApp4That*, Senior Fellow Richard Heinberg examines where this extremely pervasive belief falls apart and offers compelling evidence for why we can't count on technology alone to save us from climate change, overpopulation, and biodiversity loss.

"Watch the short animation we created with the help of some Oscar Award-winning animators and then dive into Richard's piece. Because the sooner we're honest with ourselves about the capabilities – and limits of – technology, the sooner we can build a truly sustainable, equitable, and resilient future.

**More:** <http://noapp4that.org/manifesto/> plus <http://noapp4that.org/animation/>

**Source:** Post Carbon Institute, 9<sup>th</sup> August 2017

**Editor:** This is a very lengthy thought piece which suggests solutions and provides 167 citations and an interesting graph showing the changing estimated weight of all land mammals over 12,000 years. ❖

## Air on Board Cruise Ships 'is Twice as Bad as at Piccadilly Circus'

"Passengers on cruise ships could be exposing themselves to dangerous levels of pollution, according to an investigation by Channel 4's Dispatches team that found some public areas on the ships' decks were more polluted than the world's worst-affected cities. ....

**More:** [www.theguardian.com/travel/2017/jul/03/air-on-board-cruise-ships-is-twice-as-bad-as-at-piccadilly-circus](http://www.theguardian.com/travel/2017/jul/03/air-on-board-cruise-ships-is-twice-as-bad-as-at-piccadilly-circus)

**Source:** *Carbon News*, 4<sup>th</sup> July 2017. ❖

## How the UN's Sustainable Development Goals can Quietly Change Global Business

"Beyond being development goals, corporate leaders argue the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) should become a universal benchmark for sustainable investing around the world.

"In 2006, the anti-poverty group World Vision launched a massive effort to help people in the Ethiopian district of Wolaita Sodo protect themselves from droughts. Ten years on, the project has been a staggering success: it's replenished 12 once-depleted springs, opened one new one, and increased soil fertility for at least 80% of the farms in the region while putting more than 2,000 people to work.

"The organisation achieved this in an unconventional way: namely by hiring villagers to plant trees and training nearly 300 farmers in 'agroforestry', which involves strategically planting trees across their territory to pull nitrogen, water, and other nutrients out of the air and infuse it into the earth.

"It covered its costs by carefully documenting the amount of carbon captured in its trees and selling carbon offsets to companies that needed to reduce their carbon footprints.

"The carbon offsets made the project possible, but what about all the other 'goods' the project generated – the food security, the replenished water, and the influx of funds for education? These 'co-benefits' certainly have value, too; but until recently there was no way to quantify them.

"That began to change in 2015, when every country in the world signed off on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are a list of 17 sustainability criteria woven into the lending guidelines of development banks around the world.

"That means they're already being used to guide the deployment of billions of dollars in development finance, while corporate leaders like Unilever CEO Paul Polman argue they should become a universal benchmark for sustainable investing around the world – a sort of Generally-Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) for the planet. ...

**More:** [www.eco-business.com/news/how-the-uns-sustainable-development-goals-can-quietly-change-global-business](http://www.eco-business.com/news/how-the-uns-sustainable-development-goals-can-quietly-change-global-business)

**Source:** *eco-Business.com*, 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2017. ❖

## The Carbon Majors Database

"In the same year the IPCC was established, 1988, the fossil fuel industry embarked on a massive expansion, and have doubled their contribution to global warming since that year.

"In the 28 years since 1988, 833Gt of Co2 have been released, compared to 820 Gt in the 237 years from 1750 to 1988. Over half of global industrial emissions since human-induced climate change was officially recognised can be traced to just 25 corporate and state producing entities.

"The *Carbon Majors Database* has plotted the emissions back to the main 100 industrial emitters and listed them here to make it easier to identify where we should disinvest.

"Much laborious work has gone into this database and it's a very valuable resource.

**More:** <https://b8f65cb373b1b7b15feb-c70d8ead6ced550b4d987d7c03fcd1d.ssl.cf3.rackcdn.com/cms/reports/documents/000/002/327/original/Carbon-Majors-Report-2017.pdf> 16 pages 3.836Mb, plus [www.cdp.net/en/articles/media/new-report-shows-just-100-companies-are-source-of-over-70-of-emissions](http://www.cdp.net/en/articles/media/new-report-shows-just-100-companies-are-source-of-over-70-of-emissions)

**Source:** *Tieke: ECO Alerts & Events*, 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2017. ❖

## Drawdown: The Most Comprehensive Plan Ever Proposed to Reverse Global Warming

by [Paul Hawken](#) (Editor), 256 pages.

"The 100 most substantive solutions to reverse global warming, based on meticulous research by leading scientists and policymakers around the world.

"At this point in time, the Drawdown book is exactly what is needed; a credible, conservative solution-by-solution narrative that we can do it. Reading it is an effective inoculation against the widespread perception of doom that humanity cannot and will not solve the climate crisis. Reported by-effects include increased determination and a sense of grounded hope." – Per Espen Stoknes, Author, *What We Think About When We Try Not To Think About Global Warming* .....

"In the face of widespread fear and apathy, an international coalition of researchers, professionals, and scientists have come together to offer a set of realistic and bold solutions to climate change. One hundred techniques and practices are described here – some are well known; some you may have never heard of. They range from clean energy to educating girls in lower-income countries to land use practices that pull carbon out of the air. The solutions exist, are economically viable, and communities throughout the world are currently enacting them with skill and determination. If deployed collectively on a global scale over the next thirty years, they represent a credible path forward, not just to slow the earth's warming but to reach drawdown, that point in time when greenhouse gases in the atmosphere peak and begin to decline. These measures promise cascading benefits to human health, security, prosperity, and well-being –giving us every reason to see this planetary crisis as an opportunity to create a just and liveable world.

**More:** [www.goodreads.com/book/show/31624481-drawdown](http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/31624481-drawdown) plus <http://civileats.com/2017/06/05/carbon-farming-cutting-food-waste-climate-solutions-that-dont-require-trumps-buy-in/> and an interview at <http://e360.vale.edu/features/paul-hawken-on-one-hundred-solutions-to-the-climate-crisis>

**Source:** Malcolm Rands, *Facebook* share 17<sup>th</sup> July, plus *Yale Environment 360*, 28<sup>th</sup> July 2017.

**Editor:** One reviewer provides a one sentence summary of each of the 80 suggested solutions none of which include consumerism directly e.g. the very wasteful fashion industry. ❖

## Mayors of 7,400 Cities Vow to Meet Obama's Climate commitments

"Mayors of more than 7,400 cities have vowed Donald Trump's decision to withdraw from the Paris accord will spur greater local efforts to combat climate change.

"At the first meeting of a 'global covenant of mayors', city leaders from across the US, Europe and elsewhere pledged to work together to keep to the commitments made by Barack Obama two years ago. ....

"Right now you have a level of collaboration and focus and sharing of best practices that I haven't seen..... The first meeting of the group of mayors came after Bloomberg announced on Monday an investment of \$200m over the next three years in US cities able to illustrate a commitment to reducing emissions. ....

"Addressing the European parliament in Brussels on Tuesday, Bloomberg said: 'It's important for you, and the world, to understand that the fate of America's Paris pledge does not lie with Congress or the White House. Few people realise it, but the US is already halfway to our goal of a 26% reduction in emissions by 2025 – and Washington has had almost nothing to do with that progress. ...

**More:** [www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/jun/28/global-covenant-mayors-cities-vow-to-meet-obama-climate-commitments](http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/jun/28/global-covenant-mayors-cities-vow-to-meet-obama-climate-commitments) plus [www.globalcovenantofmayors.org/](http://www.globalcovenantofmayors.org/)

**Source:** *eco-News*, 30<sup>th</sup> June 2017.

**Editor:** Although all have yet to set targets Auckland, Wgtn, Chch and Dn in NZ are among the 7,453 signed up cities. ❖

## The Three Skills Kids Need Most in the Age of Climate Change

"A new report from Planet Ark examines how prepared the next generation is to tackle the biggest future challenges facing humanity. These challenges have been defined by the United Nations and include food security, refugees, access to clean water, population increase, and climate change the most concerning overall.

"The report, *Learning from Trees: Life Lessons for Future Generations*, which is sponsored by Toyota Australia and released ahead of National Tree Day (30 July), asked 200 Australian teachers to identify the crucial skills students will need most to tackle global challenges, such as climate change, in the future.

"Teachers (100 primary and 100 secondary) ranked the following skills and attributes in order of importance: STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics); problem solving and critical thinking; creativity and innovation; compassion; 'grit' (determination, resilience, perseverance); emotional intelligence and trade skills.

"The results show 60% of surveyed teachers chose critical thinking and problem solving, grit and emotional intelligence as the most important skills. Interestingly 60% also ranked these skills as their students' weakest, with grit the weakest overall. Only 4% of Australian teachers considered STEM in the top three most needed skills.

"Research cited in the report shows how children can develop these key skills by learning outdoors, both during and outside of school hours, so providing opportunities for outdoor learning is a critical priority for parents, teachers and the wider community.

"This is a significant challenge because children have lost touch with nature in a way that has never been experienced before. Planet Ark research shows 3 out of 4 adults played outdoors more often than indoors when they were young, compared to 1 in 10 children today; toddlers are using digital devices; parents are working long hours; and heightened fears of child safety and pressure to engage in extracurricular activities all limit the amount of time children spend in nature.....

"In Finland, primary school children must spend 15 minutes every hour outdoors, whatever the weather. Researchers identify outdoor learning as an important element in Finland's successful development of the best primary school system in the world, as rated by international benchmarks. ...

**More:** [www.ecovoice.com.au/the-three-skills-kids-need-most-in-the-age-of-climate-change/](http://www.ecovoice.com.au/the-three-skills-kids-need-most-in-the-age-of-climate-change/)

**Source:** *eco-Voice*, 14<sup>th</sup> July 2017. ❖

## Why Can't New Zealand Quit Supermarket Plastic Bags?

"... We're in Morocco, and in Morocco, single use plastic bags are banned.

"Morocco is a developing country; its people are mostly poor by New Zealand standards. The average salary is between \$5000-\$7000 a year, and as described, even some of the tourist locations leave a lot to be desired. So why does Morocco give two shits about plastic bags when there are hundreds if not thousands of people living in tents made out of old pajamas? Simple. There were just too many bags. Prior to the ban in July last year, Morocco was the world's second highest consumer of the fluttery polyethylene demons (behind the US). Its 34 million people used 3 billion bags a year. That would make New Zealand's 1.6 billion bags a year look piddly, if we had a similar population, but we don't. Before the ban, Moroccans were using 88 bags per person per year. New Zealand's 4.6 million people each use 348. ....

"So why the hell are we still using them? ...

"The beauty of the Moroccan ban is that it is wonderfully simple. Single use bags are bad, so you are not allowed them. ...

**More:** <https://thespinoff.co.nz/society/26-06-2017/why-cant-new-zealand-quit-supermarket-plastic-bags/>

**Source:** SBN, 4<sup>th</sup> July 2017. ❖

## The Rise of the Food Barons

"Agriculture expert Christine Chemnitz explains why a future in which agricultural production is digitised bodes well for some of the world's largest companies, but would leave problems associated with industrialised agriculture unsolved.

**More:** [www.eco-business.com/opinion/the-rise-of-the-food-barons/](http://www.eco-business.com/opinion/the-rise-of-the-food-barons/)

**Source:** *SnippETS*, 29<sup>th</sup> June 2017. ❖

## The Status of Climate Change Litigation – A Global Review

"A new global study has found that the number of lawsuits involving climate change has tripled since 2014, with the United States leading the way. Researchers identified 654 U.S. lawsuits – three times more than the rest of the world combined. Many of the suits, which are usually filed by individuals or nongovernmental organisations, seek to hold governments accountable for existing climate-related legal commitments. The study was done by the United Nations Environment Program and Columbia University's Sabin Center for Climate Change Law. [Graphic]

"Around 177 countries recognise the right of citizens to a clean and healthy environment, and courts are increasingly being asked to define the implications of this right in relation to climate change.

"Judicial decisions around the world show many courts have the authority, and the willingness, to hold governments to account for climate change', said Michael Burger, executive director of the Sabin Center for Climate Change Law. Burger said that in the United States, litigation has been 'absolutely essential' to advancing solutions to climate change, from the first, successful, lawsuit demanding the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency regulate greenhouse gas emissions, to a recent lawsuit claiming that citizens have a constitutional right to a stable climate system. 'Similar litigation all over the world will continue to push governments and corporations to address the most pressing environmental challenge of our times', he said.

"Some suits outside the United States have already had results. Among other things, the report describes how, in September 2015, a Pakistani lawyer's case against the government for failure to carry out the National Climate Change Policy of 2012 resulted in the government designating action points within several ministries, and the creation of a commission to monitor progress.

"The report predicts more litigation will originate in developing countries, where people are expected to suffer many of the worst effects of shifting climate. The report also predicts more human-rights cases filed by 'climate refugees', coming as a direct result of climate-driven migration, resettlement and disaster recovery. By 2050 climate change could, according to some estimates, displace up to 1 billion people. That number could soar higher later in the century if global warming is not kept under 2 degrees Celsius, relative to pre-industrial levels, say some.

"International organisations including the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees have already acknowledged the need to address the plights of people displaced by changing climate. But there is yet no international agreement on the rights of such displaced persons, nor on the obligations of countries to respect them.

"...the authors ..... say because of the Paris Agreement, plaintiffs can now argue in some jurisdictions that their governments' political statements must be backed up by concrete measures to mitigate climate change.

**More:** <https://phys.org/news/2017-05-climate-litigation-rapidly-global.html> plus 1.4Mb 41 pages  
<http://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/20767>

**Source:** Ian Edwards, 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2017

**Editor:** New Zealand has 16 cases [Page 12], plus the current Thomson case; page 17. ❖

## A Message of Hope

".....These doomsday narratives are wrong, and they are dangerous.

"Telling and sharing stories, from the scientific to the personal, is one the most important tools we have to survive climate change.

"Stories help us to share facts, knowledge and experiences about the causes and effects of a warming world. But more than just educational tools, stories are how we make sense of the world we live in. The story you read in the newspaper or the documentary you watch on Netflix holds the immense ability to shape what we see and don't see. Those visibilities and invisibilities shift our perspectives. And it's those perceptions upon which we base our actions.

"I'm going to repeat that, because it's really important. The narratives we read, hear and see informs how we understand climate change, and that understanding dictates whether we act or don't.

"When we constantly see stories about communities in crisis as sea levels rise and extreme storms become more frequent, we come away with preconceived notions that all communities living on the frontline of climate change are victims in need of saving. On America's eroding edges, there is no hope – the future is presented as an ominously uncertain but seemingly inevitable defeat.

"Feeling hopeless about a situation is cognitively associated with inaction and predicts decreased goal-directed behaviour. That means when we present humanity as a hopeless victim of climate change, we are less likely to act because the ending seems inevitable. Climate change adaptation only works when we are hopeful for the future and believe that environmentally vulnerable communities have the agency to act.

"Something simple and concrete that each of us can do? Tell different stories.

"Instead of presenting narratives of helpless victims and an inevitable future of defeat, we should instead report on the climate change heroes who are doing everything they can to avoid that doomsday scenario. When people see strength in communities, we can overcome limiting labels such as climate change victim and begin to dismantle our prejudices against people in need of resources.

"We've already begun to change the narrative for cities and climate change mitigation. In the aftermath of Donald Trump's decision to withdraw from the Paris agreement, city leaders publicly committed to limit their greenhouse gas emissions. Their determination provided the foundation for an optimistic conversation about climate change solutions despite national inaction. Let's extend that climate of hope to communities along America's eroding edges by highlighting examples of local solutions.

"Communities are championing the adaptation solutions that must complement the mitigation triumphs in cities. There are hundreds of stories of America's sea level rise warriors across red and blue states – I know because I've seen them firsthand.

"Over the past year and a half, my research partner and I have traveled across the US and its territories to interview hundreds of Americans, from Alaska to Alabama to American Samoa. Funded by National Geographic and partnered with the National Trust for Historic Preservation, our aim was to find America's climate change story.

"What we found was a story of hope.

"In American Samoa, community advocate Andra Samoa is restoring the mangroves in her home village of Lenoë to stop shoreline erosion and bring back a healthy ecosystem. In Miami Beach, Florida, Elizabeth Wheaton is installing pumps and raising streets to protect neighbourhoods and historic buildings intact. And in the Native village of Shaktoolik, Alaska, Mayor Eugene

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*Continued from previous column*

in building a gravel berm to stave off rising tides. As nonpartisan efforts, community adaptations like these can bond us together as a country and spur national support for action on climate change.

"I'm the first to admit that hope in the US is hard to come by these days. With the country now ready to pull out of the Paris agreement, it's hard not to feel like America has entered a four- or eight-year period of stagnation. But hope is a future-oriented emotion. And while it's predisposed to today's tragedies, hope is based on the belief that the future can be better than today. It's possible to be hopeful for tomorrow even when things seem hopeless now.

"We are at a point today where every decision we make counts in deciding what America's climate change story will be – including the fundamental decision of how we tell climate change stories.

"Let's start telling stories of hope and heroes.

**More:**

[www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/jul/12/doomsday-narratives-climate-change-dangerous-wrong](http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/jul/12/doomsday-narratives-climate-change-dangerous-wrong)

**Source:** Tieke: *ECO Alerts & Events*, 26<sup>th</sup> July 2017. ❖

## Net Zero New Zealand – Conclusion

"Following the staged dynamic release of Vivid Economics *Net Zero New Zealand Report*, the final section is now available as is the opportunity to vote on your preferred scenario.

"Scenario analysis is an invaluable tool in planning for an uncertain future. By developing internally consistent scenarios of how the future might evolve, and how policy will affect this evolution, it is possible to identify key strategic pivot points, possible perverse outcomes, and strategies that are robust to uncertainty.

"Scenarios present the future as a series of discrete alternatives; in practice there are typically many more variants. While scenario analysis can be invaluable, it is important to stress that, typically, the development of a small number of discrete alternatives will not capture all possible futures – nor is it intended to. Rather the aim is to starkly illuminate key strategic issues and trade-offs. In practice, when seeking to manage these trade-offs, there are a wide range of options available. In many cases, it will be possible to choose between elements of different scenarios.

"The possible scenarios and appropriate policy responses will also change over time. The scenarios presented in this report represent an interpretation of the current evidence base on the opportunities available for New Zealand to reduce its emissions, in the context of the current scientific understanding of the possible severity of physical, economic and social impacts of climate change and the current global commitment to addressing it. However, all of these variables are subject to both evolutionary and disruptive change. This calls for regular assessment and adaptive decision-making approaches that can flexibly respond to unforeseeable changes in circumstances.

"In using scenario analysis to explore how New Zealand might adjust in order to substantially reduce its domestic emissions, a number of crucial conclusions emerge. .... [Five are outlined]

"From these key conclusions, we also draw a number of key policy conclusions, for further development. ...[Nine are provided.]

**More:** <http://pureadvantage.org/news/nznz/conclusion/>

**Source:** Pure Advantage 20<sup>th</sup> July 2017

**PS:** Kiwis! Make sure you vote by 23<sup>rd</sup> September! ❖

Contributions and feedback are welcomed.

Send your news items, handy hints, case studies, suggestions, comments and questions to Ray Skinner of *Sustainability Matters*.  
eMail: [ray@sustainabilitymatters.co.nz](mailto:ray@sustainabilitymatters.co.nz) Phone: +64 (09) 443 0773 Web: [www.sustainabilitymatters.co.nz](http://www.sustainabilitymatters.co.nz)