



Reduce
Reuse
Recycle

Waste

MANAGEMENT

SUBMISSION FROM
NEXT GENERATION
CONVERSATION

Waste legislation proposed amendments

Submission from Next Generation Conversation to the Ministry for the Environment

We wish to speak to our submission.

Next Generation Conservation (NGC) is a group of sixteen children and young people aged between 10 and 17 living in Ōtautahi/Christchurch. We have a strong interest in climate change and meet regularly to discuss policy issues and seek opportunities to engage and influence decision makers.

We were supported by Mana Mokopuna – Children and Young People's Commission to develop this submission. Mana Mokopuna is the independent advocate for all 1.2 million children and young people in Aotearoa New Zealand. The NGC has partnered with the Chief Children's Commissioner and Mana Mokopuna for many climate and environmental related projects. This collaboration stems from Mana Mokopuna's statutory mandate to promote the participation of children and young people in decisions that affect their lives.

Our submission discusses three main areas that are important to us when it comes to waste management:

1. The importance of children's participation.
2. Why managing waste effectively is important to the NGC and what we believe needs to change.
3. Our solutions and ideas for waste management.

Children's participation is important, and it is our right.

We believe that children's participation is important. It is also our right under the Children's Convention. Tamariki and rangatahi provide a different, fresh perspective.

"Our opinions matter!"

Waste is part of our daily lives too. There are things adults don't question, but children do, such as how waste will impact all living things, including us, in 30 years' time. We will be alive then, many adults alive today won't be. We will be most affected by the decisions being made now, but others are currently driving us to a destination we will need to live in.

"At the end of the day, it is our and our kids' future".

Children are some of the most at risk, right now and in the future, and need adequate representation. What happens now, new laws included, will affect us the most, therefore we should get a say. Our perspectives will differ from those who are currently making decisions.

However, we also strongly believe it is important that **everyone gets a say**, as everyone views things from a different perspective. It is everyone's world, a world where all living things are interdependent and interconnected.

Our priorities for Waste Management changes include:

1. **Education is key:** Teaching people = education for the essentials.
2. **Protecting the planet for today, for future generations, and for all living things:**
This is important because if we don't do something, it will get way more out of hand than

it already is. We are going to grow up on this Earth, and we deserve a good planet. Intergenerational equity is a thing.

3. **Equity and support for communities:** Making it more accessible/easier to recycle and better help and support for rural areas.

In summary, children need to have greater representation and participation in waste management issues. Increased education is also needed, amongst all people, as education equals action. Protecting the environment for not only today but also for future generations and all living things is a key aspect too. Equity and support for all communities must be revised, such as accessible and easier recycling as well as greater support for rural areas.

Managing waste effectively is key and we believe change is needed.

For the NGC, waste isn't just about what goes in the bin, it's about what we're leaving behind for the future generations to come. Managing waste effectively is about protecting the environment, our communities, and the generations who will live with the consequences of what we do now.

"We are going to grow up on this earth, and we deserve a good planet."

We discuss various issues related to climate change at our NGC meetings and our message is always the same - **children and young people want action now**. One of the actions we want to change is how waste is managed.

Waste affects our whole planet - the waterways, soils, and animals, including us. Waste affects everything. If it's not managed effectively the polluting of our ecosystems can and will affect human health.

For the NGC, effective waste management is a matter of justice, not only environmental justice but intergenerational justice. We believe we shouldn't have to inherit a broken system when we've been asking for change. We need to clean things up for future generations.

We are clear that education, accountability, and access must improve. We believe that **education must reach everyone**

Education has come up in every NGC session. But the current proposal only mentions education briefly in relation to littering. That's not enough. Both adults and children need to understand the broader impacts of not managing waste effectively, whilst being educated on the best way to deal with this issue.

Education is so important. People need to know what happens to waste, how to sort it, what can be recycled, and what the consequences are. They also need to understand that there does not need to be waste in the first place. If waste was tackled at source, at the point of production, this would help enormously. If people understood more about this, they could advocate for change. **Better education creates better habits, which leads to real change.**

"Making it easier for people to deal with their waste".

We heard how hard it can be to recycle properly and how much confusion still exists around bins, labels, and soft plastics. Changes to the system could include:

- introducing a soft-plastics bin, in addition to the rubbish, recycling and green waste bins.
- clear, easy to understand signage about what can go in each bin;
- place more bins in easily accessible public places;
- ensure consistency nationwide - whilst the rules around kerbside recycling are now standardised across the country, waste management is not the same across all districts.

"We need stronger enforcement in this area, supported by education".

We support higher fines and stricter rules, but this is a big thing for us only if it is backed by education and fairness. Potential ideas we had include:

- fines for littering, there are many examples from overseas countries that could be examine;
- repeat offenders could receive bigger fines or community service;
- stricter fines or community service given to those involved in contamination.

However, enforcement without awareness won't fix the problem. Communities need to understand what's expected, and why it matters.

It is very important businesses take responsibility for their own waste minimisation.

"Businesses need to be more aware and take responsibility."

A major change we want to see is around **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)**. It's time for big companies, not just local councils, to own their impact.

"Every business who sells in NZ should pay for their share of the waste."

The idea we would like to propose is that if businesses are creating the waste, they should also fund solutions to the waste they are creating. The 'polluter pays' principle should be expanded and enforced. Education should also reach businesses, not just individuals.

In summary, the NGC sees waste management not just as a technical issue, but a generational challenge. Our voices matter. We, and those who come after us, will have to live with the consequences of decisions and choices made today. We want a system that listens to the concerns and ideas of young people, educates communities, holds polluters accountable, and builds a cleaner future for all.

An immediate and urgent focus on solutions and innovation

We believe we need to focus on high priority topics such as education and enforcement. We could then integrate lower priority topics such as local council initiatives i.e., bin management and recycling. We can still add in bits of management and bins, but they aren't required to be in the legislation and are more for our local councils to manage.

As a team, we would like to suggest some innovative solutions for waste management, for now and for the future. These build on and support our key ideas discussed earlier.

1. **Education:** This needs to be the main focus for the legislation, with an initiative to host more community education sessions, and increased education at school and workplaces.

For people who can't access those, provide a mandatory app that lets people know things like bin days, and what can go in the different bins. This will help raise awareness and give more publicity to what the council and government is doing.

Other ideas for waste management education include:

- more publicity for the council stuff;
- raise awareness about waste and what goes in what bin;
- education on climate change and waste management;
- make info available for everyone where it [waste] is going, what's happening and how much?;
- more awareness about what stickers mean on bins;
- education for everyone -
 - o education classes for adults;
 - o education at schools and workplaces;
 - o community webinars;
 - o library info sessions;

2. **Enforcement:** We support higher fines and stricter rules, but this is a big thing for us only if they're backed by education and fairness.

We propose giving police and government officials more enforcement and allow them to give higher punishments for waste. These could include fines per contaminated rubbish items, then higher fines for littering. Then continue to build the fines or punishments for repeat offenders. These punishments could include community service that helps with waste management.

Additional ideas for waste management enforcement include:

- give [litter] officers and councils more enforcement;
- more punishment for littering,
 - o \$50 fine if a bottle cap or contaminated rubbish, if you do it again you get fined more (\$100);
 - o higher fines and punishment for littering;
 - o BIG FINES for repeat offenders + those who do it don't care;
- if you are caught contaminating, you have to do community service (CS), or pay a fine, or something to punish you for your actions;
 - o People doing CS can be the ones picking plastic out of the recycling trucks.

3. **Management:** To achieve effective education and enforcement, we will need a focused and funded approach, starting at central government.

We believe there needs to be a dedicated Ministry, a group in Parliament, for waste management. We think having a specialized Ministry for waste management will help make the whole process more productive, and help waste management run smoother. The Ministry could help run things like education classes or sorting bins across the country with easier to read labels.

Other ideas for waste management include:

- research:
 - o A census sent out to the whole country to get an idea of what people are doing with waste.
 - o A team researching other options for landfill disposal.
- dispose of waste adequately:
 - o Less plastic by creating and/or having more biodegradable options.
 - o 70% of soft plastics to be turned into pencil cases, soft toys etc..
 - o Doing more with recycling i.e. plastic bottles [can be] more than waste.
 - o Turn recycling into art.
 - o Make it easier to recycle - tell people what makes it able or not able to recycle.
 - o Have people that sort out the recycling rubbish trucks.
 - o A soft plastic bin. For example, in Otautahi, we currently have yellow, red, and green bins, so the soft plastics bin could be purple;
- reduce the time that the rubbish lorries come and pick up rubbish, for example every 3-4 weeks;
- put bins in more accessible public places. If people don't have to hold on to their rubbish, they are less likely to leave it in a random place;
- a robot that scoops trash out of the ocean;
- a way to divert storm water / grey water to be used effectively to progress our environment.

4. **Businesses:** As discussed previously, we believe a major change is around Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR). It's time for big companies, not just local councils, to own their impact e.g., big factories should pay a fine for every ton of rubbish they give to customers.

Ideas for business waste management include:

- every business who sells in Aotearoa New Zealand pays for their share of the waste, which will,
 - o make businesses accountable;
 - o help fund it [waste minimisation];
 - o encourage incentives for businesses to switch to recyclable or recycled plastics.

Thank you for this opportunity to share our thoughts and ideas on Waste Legislation Proposed Amendments. **We look forward to speaking to our submission in the near future.**