

WASTE MANAGEMENT IN NEW ZEALAND

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ABSTRACT

New Zealand is a small trading nation that is located in the south-western Pacific Ocean. The nation's pattern of resource conversion and waste generation are similar to many other developed countries, and every year New Zealand residents and industries discard over 3 million tonnes of waste to landfills and clean fills.

Environmental management in New Zealand was subject to extensive reform in the late 1980's and early 1990's, and today's environmental policies and laws reflect the concerns of both the global community and the New Zealand public. The key international obligations that address waste management practices are Agenda 21 and the Framework Convention on Climate Change that were developed as part of the Earth Summit that was held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.

At the national level, the New Zealand Government adopted its Environment 2010 Strategy in 1995 to address a multitude of environmental issues. In order to meet these objectives, the Government has adopted a Waste Management Policy that encourages a "waste generator pays" approach and use of a Waste Management Hierarchy. This paper addresses environmental management programs, waste statistics, and waste management practices in New Zealand.

INTRODUCTION

New Zealand is located in the southwestern Pacific Ocean, approximately 1,900 kilometers southeast of Australia. The country, which has a population of approximately 3.5 million people, is comparable in size to Britain and Japan. The nation is well known for its spectacular scenery and outdoor lifestyles.

New Zealand's pattern of resource conversion is fairly similar to Australia and the affluent societies of the Northern Hemisphere. In addition, generation of wastes in New Zealand is also comparable to that of other countries in the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS

Environmental management in New Zealand was subject to extensive reform in the late 1980's and early 1990's, and today's environmental policies and laws reflect the concerns of both the global community and the New Zealand public.

International Obligations

A number of important agreements were entered into at the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, or Earth Summit, that was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Discussions at this conference were guided by the principle of sustainable development, which is defined as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs."