

Report Summary

Palmy's Plastic Pollution Strategy: Workshop outcomes

Report on public input provided during the Palmy Plastic Strategy Workshop
(22 June 2019, Te Manawa)

On 22 June 2019, approximately sixty members of the general public gathered to brainstorm solutions to plastic pollution in Palmerston North, with particular emphasis on the city's urban waterways (which feed into the Manawatū River). This report summarises participant ideas.

1. Neighbourhood pilot to enhance care and connection to Palmerston North's urban waterways

Participants wanted holistic restoration of the urban stream environment. Many of their ideas could be integrated within a neighbourhood pilot focusing on one of Te Kawau stream's more open stretches. A pilot project would also provide opportunity to create inspiring media (such as film) and to identify which ideas for urban stream restoration are most applicable across the whole city.

Participant suggestions included community-council collaboration to reduce littering and illegal dumping, actions and events to clean up urban waterways, the establishment of localised kaitiaki for areas of each stream, streamside planting and wetlands development for native species habitat and stormwater management, and new access and pathways to connect people to the stream, with signs to celebrate Te Kawau's heritage and ecological value.

2. Action on plastic food packaging

Participants sought a reduction in food packaging through bans, through the development and adoption of re-usable and compostable packaging, and through awareness raising. They asked for eco-labelling and recommended the development of an interactive app that would allow consumers to scan products and receive easy-to-use information about the packaging.

They also asked for the renewal of the Manawatu Food Action Network, linking food packaging and transport packaging reduction to the re-localisation of food and to community-based growing, cooking, preserving, and sharing.

3. Suggestions for Palmerston North City Council (PNCC) waste and recycling infrastructure and services

Participants identified ways that PNCC could support reductions in litter and in single-use plastics, such as pamphlet drops and other awareness-raising campaigns; more rubbish and recycling bins; and more accessible low-cost legal dumping options, water bottle refill stations, polystyrene recycling, and plastic-free city events (e.g. at The Square).

4. Ideas for education and awareness raising around plastic pollution to promote behaviour change among residents

All table discussion groups called for more education and awareness raising about plastic pollution issues and solutions. They asked for information on the human health and ecological impacts of plastics and on steps individuals can take. They wanted programmes to identify and promote champions and businesses who are prepared to lead change. Some participants encouraged positive and small-step campaigns, but at the same time they asked for a wholesale change in culture and mind-set. Several tables identified anti-smoking campaigns as a model approach. They encouraged using multiple types of media and getting the message out to diverse groups.

5. Schools-based initiatives and youth engagement

Participants called for increased engagement with schools (especially primary schools) around the issues and solutions to plastic pollution. Schools could be involved in ongoing monitoring research (citizen science) and clean-up days (perhaps including inter-school clean-up competitions). They could register as kaitiaki of sections of urban streams. They could declare themselves “single-use plastic-free zones” and take actions to reduce plastics in stationery and lunchboxes.

Youth engagement was understood to be more challenging because, for some people, “eco isn’t cool.” Suggestions for reversing this perception included gamification, film-making, and volunteering with community groups and eco-businesses to develop work skills and experience, including research experience.

Participants proposed setting plastics and plastic pollution as a special topic within the Manawatu Science Fair.

6. Advocacy for change in central government waste policies and programmes

Many of participants’ solutions require action beyond the local level, for example nation-wide bans, incentivised product stewardship schemes (e.g. bottle deposits), funded research into plastic alternatives, and the development of industry-funded hubs to take responsibility for commercial packaging.

In general terms, participants want an integrated central policy framework based on funded research, the precautionary principle, full-cost accounting, product stewardship, and polluter pays.

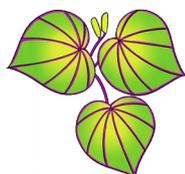
7. Clean-up campaigns

Participants offered many ideas suitable for September’s World Clean-up Day and other clean-up campaigns, including registering kaitiaki to take responsibility for specific stretches of urban waterways; holding competitions between schools and via social media and the phone app ‘Litterati’; spreading the message “don’t drop it”; and offering alternatives to illegal dumping.

A full version of this report is available at:

<https://enm.org.nz/about/palmy-plastic-challenge/pppc-report>.

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