

Friday 5th November

Too much packaging? “Absolutely” say consumers

A large majority (86%) of New Zealanders are concerned by the amount of packaging waste they have to deal with, according to a new poll* “Packaging Waste in NZ” released today.

Wanaka Wastebusters Campaigner Angus Ho said the results clearly show that people are sick of over-packaging and want minimal packaging that they can reuse and recycle.

Nearly all the people surveyed (94%) said they want to choose packaging they can reuse or recycle.

“This poll shows New Zealanders really care about the impact that packaging waste has on the environment. The vast majority (81%) always make the effort to recycle packaging when they get home.

Mr Ho said unfortunately a lot of packaging waste can’t be reused or recycled, so there is no alternative but to send it to the dump. He said that, as the Government is not implementing mandatory product stewardship schemes, the burden of packaging waste is left with the end consumer.

“You have to ask yourself why in this age companies are still using out-dated packaging which is going to end up in the landfill. There is no excuse, and there is no consumer support for that kind of packaging.”

“Given the comments we got from people on the street, we’re about to tap into a well of discontent. Many people seized on the chance to talk about the packaging that annoys them,” said Mr Ho. The most concerning issue for New Zealanders was over-packaging (78%), followed by greenwash claims (73%), no reusable or recyclable option (70%) and poor labeling (63%).

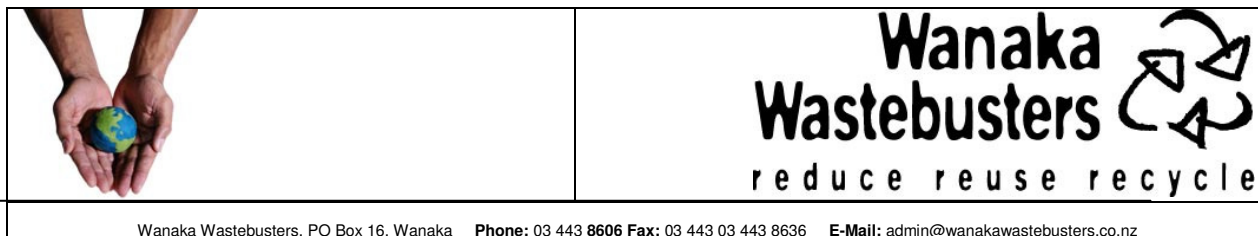
“Blister packs (cardboard backing with a plastic cover) were very unpopular because not only can you not recycle them, you can’t get into them either.

“Composite soft-drink cans which mix plastic and metal were also disliked because they can’t be recycled in New Zealand.”

Mr Ho said an interesting finding from the survey was that only 10% of respondents always checked whether packaging can be recycled before they buy it, even though more than 80% always recycled at home.

“All products should have minimal, reusable and recyclable packaging. That should be the producers’ job. The responsibility clearly lies with the producers.

“It shouldn’t be up to consumers to have to track down products with best practice packaging when they’re standing in front of a supermarket shelf.



“The consumers’ job is simple – to recycle and reuse when they get home. Our survey showed that the consumers are holding up their end, but there are a lot of producers who are letting everyone down with over-packaging, green-wash claims about packaging and non-recyclable packaging.

Based on the survey results Wanaka Wastebusters urges:

- **National Government** - investigate the introduction of a program like the European Packaging Directive’s Green Dot compliance system which has been running successfully since 2004.
- **Producers and Manufacturers** - provide products minimal packaging that can be reused over and over again and can then be recycled.
- **Retailer and Consumers** – use their power to choose products with minimal, reusable and recyclable packaging. Send an email or letter to manufacturers and producers to ask them to change their packaging to be minimal and recyclable.

“We are going to send this survey report to the Government, the Packaging Council and major producers and we’re looking forward to their response.”

Wanaka Wastebusters will be tapping into consumer discontent around packaging by asking for nominations for the “worst packaging” awards early next year.

Mr Ho said there will also be a “best packaging” competition to recognise companies who make an extra effort to package their products with the environment in mind. The winner will be chosen by the public through an online vote.

The website which will host the competition will also provide in depth information about good and bad packaging to help inform consumers.

Wanaka Wastebusters will put on a travelling road-show in April 2011 to raise awareness around packaging waste, and excite people about the competition.

ENDS

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**Wanaka Wastebusters conducted the poll with a sample size of 1,000 across 5 areas in NZ. A full report is available from Angus Ho.*

Wanaka Wastebusters is a community enterprise set up by the Wanaka community ten years ago. Our work includes recycling, reuse and education for sustainability services. All surpluses are put back into our services with the vision of achieving a 70 percent resource recovery target for our community by 2014.

The Demystifying Packaging Choices project has received financial support from the Waste Minimisation Fund, which is administered by the Ministry for the Environment.