

SDG MR 2 - Waikato Wellbeing Project

Big hopes for new model of community transformation

Pioneering a new model of community transformation to create a more environmentally sustainable, prosperous and inclusive region, the Waikato Wellbeing project has attracted attention around the country, including from [Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern](#) who spoke at the project launch in February.

“The Prime Minister told us, ‘no pressure, but we’re watching you, this is an interesting pilot and a new way of doing things’,” [Waikato Wellbeing project](#) co-founder, WEL Energy Trust CEO Raewyn Jones says.

“It is system change, it is looking at a movement, rather than an organisation, it is challenging, but the time seems to be right.”

Jones will share the project’s beginnings and progress on 19 November, joining a line-up of inspirational speakers for the [first online hui](#) of the 2020 – 2021 Aotearoa New Zealand Sustainable Development Goals Summit Series.

Like many others, Jones had been grappling with how to use the SDGs as a common language to develop achievable sustainability and community targets.

The lightbulb moment came while she was on holiday in Nepal. Jones noticed on her boarding pass that Yeti airlines had donated a portion of her ticket price to achieving the SDGs for Nepal.

“Even better, in the pocket in the front of my seat was a brochure listing SMART [specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, timely] goals. For example, we will reduce child stuntedness by x% by x date.”

“I thought, ‘If they could do it on Nepal, why couldn’t we do it in Waikato?’ The airline funded organisations that were working towards specific targets. It showed me that funding wasn’t just rates, or government funding, it was business money as well.”

Jones took the idea back to Waikato and soon had ten partner organisations onboard. These spanned iwi, councils, community trusts, business, NGOs, researchers and communities.

The team consulted through community sessions in Hamilton, Thames, Otorohanga and Matamata, which over 110 individuals attended, online feedback, presentations in boardrooms and talking to students at a local high school.

Ten targets evolved as the region’s first set of targets to end poverty, fight inequality and act on climate change, informed by and adapted from the SDGs.

For each target we asked, ‘Is it feasible, is there work already happening in the region, and is it a pressure point – meaning if we achieve that one goal will it have a disproportionately positive effect on other flow on effect on other goals? So that’s why we chose in health and wellbeing reducing the rate of non-communicable diseases because it will effect a whole lot of things such as employment.”

Other [examples of targets are](#) to reduce the number of people experiencing energy hardship in Waikato from 18,000 in 2019 to zero by 2030, and to reduce the number of children living below the poverty line from one in six to less than 1% by 2030.

“I’m interested in impact investment – how we activate the entire economy, from individuals and consumers to government and NGOs, to achieve more than profit.”

It’s timely work, Jones says, with Covid-19 providing another prompt to do things differently.

“It is a coalition, that’s important. And there are other organisations doing similar work in their own way. There is no one size fits all, but we can learn from each other.”

Hui 1# Seeing the Change, of the Aotearoa New Zealand Sustainable Development Goals Summit Series, is an online live event on 19 November from 6.30 – 8.30pm. Tickets are just \$15 or free for youth, available through [Humantix ticketing platform](#), which supports Māori and Pasifika education.

Following lightning talks and a Q&A session, participants will join one of two streams – one for those who are new to the SDGs, run by Allen Hill, Principal Lecturer in Sustainable Practice at Ara and a sustainability educator with over 20 years of experience, and another for those who are more familiar, run by facilitator and weaver James Bishop.

The event is organised with Ngāi Tuahuririri and Ngāi Tahu, as well as Pasifika communities, co-hosted by University of Canterbury and Lincoln University with support from Ara, Christchurch City Council and partners ChristchurchNZ, SEEDS Podcast, Tourism NZ and the New Zealand National Commission for the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO).

The Aotearoa New Zealand Sustainable Development Summit Series 2020-2021:

The 2020-2021 series is made up of 3 online hui and 1 in-person summit - under the theme of "Pathways to (Urgent) Action". The series will present a journey - taking people from firstly understanding the goals, to exploring how we as individuals engage with the goals, to how we can work together to achieve the goals, culminating in the final summit which will place an emphasis on the role of collaboration and positive systemic change.

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