

# Proposed Greens bill puts price on rubbish

by Vicky Crawford

A proposed tax on waste could see you paying for the rubbish you create.

The polluter pays tax is part of the Green Party's waste minimisation bill which aims to put the costs of disposal back in the hands of those who create waste.

Submissions closed on September 1 and the local government and environment select committee is now considering them before sending the bill back for a second reading.

If passed, the new legislation could put a \$25 per tonne levy on all landfill waste from 2007.

It's a move Waitakere City Council solid waste manager Jon Roscoe deems necessary if the government's waste minimisation goals are to be realised.

Roscoe is part of a group including Carter Holt Harvey, Waste Management, the mayors of Waitakere, North Shore and Rodney and the Ministry of the Environment.

They have agreed on a waste levy starting at \$10 per tonne in the first year, progressing to \$30 per tonne in the third.

He says central government have pledged to support the proposal so long as businesses and local government can agree.

"Currently government has set targets to minimise waste without providing the necessary legislation to do so," he says.

The levy will be used to subsidise compost projects, kerbside recycling, recovery hubs and other waste minimisation measures.

It is also expected to provide an economic disincentive for homes and businesses to dump waste.

At present some councils use

rates to fund their waste disposal systems while others, such as Waitakere City, use a user-pays system.

Roscoe cites the Waitakere experience as proof of the benefits of a user pays scheme.

When pre-paid refuse bags were introduced to Waitakere in 1999, waste was reduced by 20 per cent overnight, he says.

The use of economic tools to minimise waste is supported by the Parliamentary Commission for the Environment (PCE), an independent government watchdog which assesses how well public agencies are managing the environment.

In a July report, commissioner Dr Morgan Williams argued economic incentives had worked well overseas and should be used in New Zealand.

He does not believe the current voluntary waste reduction measures are enough to cause "a significant change in behaviour".

But some do. New Zealand Packaging Council director Paul Curtis argues voluntary targets are working well to reduce waste for his council's 140 member companies.

He says current costs of sending waste to landfill already discourage excessive waste and have led to packaging companies light-weighting their product.

He says levies are merely a revenue-gathering exercise which will do little to minimise waste.

"The tax would have to be a lot higher to act as a disincentive," he says.

Curtis says the government should provide stronger incentives for companies to set up their own product stewardship initiatives.

He believes takeback schemes such as those in place at Fisher and Paykel and Resenes are more

likely to reduce waste in problem areas.

Moreover, he doesn't believe the huge costs involved in administering a new levy system will justify the returns.

Business New Zealand spokesperson Kathryn Asare agrees waste problems should be targeted case-by-case rather than imposing a levy on everyone. She worries about increased costs to small businesses.

But Roscoe argues the cost to business will not be significant – based on a \$30 per tonne figure, expected revenue is just \$90 million a year, or approximately 0.1

per cent of GDP.

He says businesses can reduce their levy by reducing their waste, "which is the entire point of the exercise".

Waste figures from Christchurch, where there are 30,800 businesses, indicate the average additional cost for each business would be less than \$100 per year.

Meanwhile domestic users can expect to pay just 1.2 cents more for every rubbish bag they send to a landfill, he says.

For Roscoe it's a case of the advantages outweighing the disadvantages.



CLEAN UP: A Green Party bill aims to reduce the country's waste.

## MySpace launches fresh NZ musical talent

By Jacqueline Smith

Illegal piracy and downloads have provided the New Zealand music scene with fresh talent it may otherwise have missed.

This week Robert Harris, aka The Robba, releases his new alternative hip-hop EP titled *The Robba*, produced from the privacy of his Kingsland flat.

Harris, 22, has already had some of his tracks played on local radio stations like Fleet FM, bFM and Kiwi FM as well as having his self-produced music video broadcast on music television station Alt TV.

"It's pretty much all I ever wanted," he says.

Harris credits his rapidly-growing profile to the advent of the free internet service MySpace.com

The service has been a useful avenue for building music industry contacts as well as for distributing the EP.

The DJ he is gigging with is also a MySpace find.

Fleet FM station manager Jimmy LeRoq says the accessibility of music-making technology has had a "refreshing" impact on the New Zealand music scene.

"It's less polished but at the same time it's a whole lot more real," he says.

Emerging artists send their recordings to Fleet FM on a regular basis and more often than not get radio play.

LeRoq says the emergence of many new "indie" artists is because of their ability to do it themselves without having to conform to the commercial interests of recording companies and big labels.

"It's a bit of a revolution," he says.

And it's not only the "underground" scene that's being serviced by self-made artists.

Fast Crew had two number one singles in 2004 and are now a New Zealand household name, but the group of hip-hop artists began in the same way as The Robba did.

They started recording unique hip-hop beats in leading rapper Jerome Fortune's garage.

Now they are busy recording their second album.

Although Fortune says he is happily "sitting in the house making a living from what I do," he warns that new technology does not make it an easy road to become a renowned musician.

"It's a hard slog having to do gigs every weekend," he says.

Harris is looking forward to generating a following from the gigs he has lined up and is even planning to do a national tour, all advertised on MySpace.

He is optimistic the New Zealand music scene is finally prepared for greater originality in emerging artists.

## Gambler picks machine over mother

by Melanie Allan

A woman who continued to play the pokies while her mother lay on the ground unconscious "quite likely had a gambling problem", says Problem Gambling Foundation chief executive John Stansfield.

The 74-year-old woman and her daughter were playing pokies at the Thirsty Whale Restaurant and Bar in Three Kings on a Saturday afternoon last month when the elderly woman collapsed.

The victim's daughter yelled for the staff to call an ambulance, says duty manager Isaac Henschman.

"She was unconscious, being held up on the chair when I walked in. Everyone else just kept playing, minding their own business," he says.

Under the instruction of emergency services, the staff put the



ISAAC HENCHMAN

woman in the recovery position and waited for an ambulance to arrive.

A Thirsty Whale chef, Agnes Naufahu, says at this stage the daughter turned back to her machine.

"She had one foot over her mother and one hand on the machine trying to play the pokies!"

"I just couldn't believe it. It was horrible, it really was. All she was concerned about was that damn machine. Now that's addiction."

Stansfield says: "Something is obviously wrong if the primary relationship is with the machine, not with a family member."

"I think the question here is that, is this the type of society we want to be living in?"

One patron told Naufahu that when the woman had first collapsed, her daughter had propped her up against a machine and continued gambling.

An ambulance arrived after

four minutes and paramedics lifted the woman onto a stretcher and carried her to the ambulance.

"The daughter delayed the ambulance from leaving because she was abusing one of the other patrons and accusing him of playing her machine," says Henschman.

**"I just couldn't believe it. It was horrible, it really was. All she was concerned about was that damn machine."**

The ambulance staff had been waiting to ask the daughter if she would go with them.

Instead of accompanying her mother in the ambulance, the woman

chose to stay behind and keep gambling, says Naufahu.

The elderly woman returned to the Thirsty Whale a few days later with a thank-you card for the staff and told Henschman she had suffered a "problem with her brain".

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