



The Eco Design Advisor Programme: Supporting the Transformation of New Zealand's Housing Stock

Lois Easton & Roman Jaques



Creating homes and neighbourhoods that work well into the future and don't cost the Earth

What is the Eco Design Advisor Service?

A sustainable housing advisory service offered free in some local councils to provide input advice on:

- New home designs
- Renovations and retrofits
- How to improve the sustainability and performance of existing homes

Also provides an education role for:

- Local community groups
- Designers and industry groups
- Developers

Why is it needed?

New Zealand houses are cold, mouldy and inefficient

- An average 6°C below WHO recommended minimum temperatures in winter
- 45% have visible mould
- 300,000 homes heated by unflued gas heaters
- Implicated in our high rates of asthma, high winter mortality rate (1600 excess deaths/year)

AND

- Many new houses also perform badly

Future Challenges

Future Challenge	Housing Consequence
Ageing Population	Accessibility Smaller household size Reduced income for operating costs
Diversifying demographics	Different uses of spaces
Changing lifestyles, technologies & activities in houses	Diverse demands on space Increased services needs New services Reorganisation of spaces Changing character of residential areas
Intensification of urban form	Smaller units Proximity issues (noise, odour, privacy) Expectations of leisure needs
More rental occupancy	Flexibility of space needed without structural change
Impacts of Climate Change	Summer overheating Flooding Greater storm damage
Increasing costs of resources & infrastructure	Services such as electricity, water supply & waste collection more expensive

Origins of the Programme

Setup based on research undertaken by BRANZ (2005) - identified key barriers to homeowners building more sustainably

- no stage at which they are directly prompted to make decisions regarding sustainability;
- a lack of specific technical information and advice; and
- a lack of industry expertise combined with a general reluctance to implement sustainability features.

A role for local government

Building more sustainable homes:

- Meets council responsibilities under the LGA, RMA and Building Act.
- Can help to deliver Council objectives, e.g. healthier, more resource efficient communities.
- Has consequences for Council investment, e.g. three waters infrastructure, waste management services, roads, carparking, and parks.

How it works

Advisor located within local Council – often in the Building Control area

Advice offered to homeowners and designers by phone, email, in person at the Council, and at the house

Presentations and networking with interested groups

Advice provided is based on robust research

Strong connections between the Advisors – regular conference calls, training conferences, email discussions

What's Happened so Far

2006 Pilot programme – Part funded through MFE Sustainable Management Fund, 3 Councils (Waitakere, Kapiti Coast, Hamilton)

2007 Expanded programme to 8 Councils– still with MFE part funding

2009 MFE funding ceased – Wellington & Queenstown Lakes programme disestablished

2010 Lower Hutt joins the programme

Is it worth it?

Various assessments undertaken by BRANZ researchers indicate:

- The programme is highly valued by its users
- The programme makes a difference – in terms of changing what people choose to do to their homes, and in increasing awareness of sustainable building and how to do it
- The “face to face” nature of the programme is a major strength, as is the specific advice able to be given in house

Total Events – Sep 07 – Dec 09

EDA Location	Networking Events	Presentations	Home Visits	Short Consultations
Auckland	188	75	328	155
Waitakere	278	90	269	400
Hamilton	97	95	270	152
Tauranga/ Western BOP	175	79	298	594
Kapiti Coast	119	69	341	357
Wellington (disestablished after 1 year)	44	13	112	103
Nelson (0.75 position)	38	47	221	135
Queenstown (0.6 position)	22	12	168	72
Total	967	297	1707	1568

EDAs supporting Council priorities

Programme initially set up with standard job descriptions

Now Councils 100% fund their EDAs and different Councils have placed different emphasis on priorities

Local Councils have major role in water, waste infrastructure provision & building compliance

Unitary authorities have additional interests in air quality and energy

Improved Council Processes

Council	Initiatives Undertaken
Auckland City	Solar hot water / heat pump hot water consent streamlining
Waitakere City	Solar hot water / heat pump hot water consent streamlining
Hamilton City	Zero consent fees on solar hot water
Tauranga City	50% reduction on consent fees for solar hot water systems
Western Bay of Plenty District	Zero consent fees on solar hot water
Nelson City	Solar hot water consent streamlining, zero consent fees for solar hot water systems
Queenstown Lakes District	Solar hot water / heat pump hot water consent streamlining

Nelson Solar Hot Water Streamlining

First step in establishing wider programme to promote solar hot water systems in Nelson

EDA based in Building Consent area – identified significant inefficiency and unnecessary costs (to Council, applicant & installer)

Streamlined process – standardised information provided, specialist compliance officer, fast turnaround

Zero consent fee – but poor installation and rechecks charged for

EDA now also administering Solar Saver loans programme

What the users think

2010 Survey

- 61.5% said advice was excellent
- 28.8% said advice was very good
- 93.8% applied some aspect of the advice to their home
- Lack of product advice (brand) the most common identified gap
- 59.2% would be prepared to pay for the service – but only between \$5 and \$100 for a consultation

Distribution and Implications

Reasonably good coverage in the North Island
South Island very poor coverage – only Nelson
represented in network

About 50% of the population able to access the
programme

Major funding nationally (Warm Up NZ) to
provide subsidies to install insulation and
efficient heating – ambulance at the bottom of
the cliff, but nothing put into the prevention/
education side

Huge issue in Christchurch with rebuilding

Who should pay?

Research indicates that it is independent advice that is what consumers want – someone who is not trying to sell something

Consumers however don't want to pay for advice

Majority of people seeking energy/ comfort related advice ...BUT

Some councils see that it's not their role to fund this, or want to focus on their key priorities

Both Wellington City and Queenstown Lakes District ceased funding the service – despite high demand and good consumer feedback - their rationale “it's a central government role”.

Conclusions

The EDA service is highly valued by it's users who are well satisfied by the advice

A high level of uptake of the service has occurred across homeowners and the industry

The independent face to face nature of the service is a unique success factor

Research is planned to better quantify the changes that occur as a result of the consultations – previous research indicates the programme is having an impact on actions

Funding for the programme is precarious, due to the split in benefits