



# Wāhi/Place: Bulletin 1

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Equipping the Community Sector for Climate Action

## Te Mea Nui: Environmental Responsibility

He aha te mea nui? He tangata, he tangata, he tangata.

This is the basis of the community sector in Aotearoa New Zealand: what matters most? People, people, people. Not what makes us the most money, not imposing agendas. Not what's easiest for us but what is best for the people we work with. We work with people because we care for people. We are people-professionals.

So we offer client-centred counselling and patient-focused services, we build community and work for justice. We meet human need. We are the community sector.

Engari, kei whea te Taiao? Where does the natural world fit in our human-centric models of professional practice?

A little over two years ago I started asking this question of professional bodies and community organisations in Aotearoa. What is your environmental sustainability strategy? What are you doing about climate change? Two years ago I often got the response of "Gosh, no one has asked me that. But funny you should call because I was just thinking about it." These questions were just starting to emerge but were still left-field, coming from out of the blue.

I ran into a fundamental category conflict. Some people said straight up: "We are a community organisation, not an environmental organisation" ... not our problem. Our Western models of client practice separates people-care from earth-care; Māori and Pasifika approaches do not.

Of course, it was terrible timing. Covid stretched community organisations to the limit. There's not enough funding or staff and there's too much need. Do we have to look after the environment as well?!

Two years on, the answer seems more obvious. Yes, we must hold together human and environmental care. 'He tangata' needs 'te Taiao', and visa versa. This week climate change became all too real for Auckland communities. We no longer have the luxury of taking the natural world for granted.

The conversation has moved on. Leaders in the community sector no longer need persuading that they need to address climate change. The questions are now around how we incorporate sustainability into 'te mea nui', the core values and priorities of community development, and what that looks like in practice.

~ Silvia Purdie

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Article: '6 Principles of Climate Leadership: Community Climate Action in Aotearoa New Zealand'

[www.place.net.nz/6-principles.html](http://www.place.net.nz/6-principles.html)

Nō whea koe?  
Where are you from?  
Kei whea tātou?  
Where are we?  
Korā te maunga,  
konā te awa,  
konei te whenua.  
Home is place  
and home is people.  
We are in-place:  
manaakitia te wāhi nei.

Place Consultancy offers a fixed-price facilitation to get your organisation well on the way towards your own sustainability strategy and climate action plan.

Founder Silvia Purdie is a trainer, counsellor, supervisor, author and ordained minister, based in Upper Hutt, NZ.

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*Wāhi/Place Bulletin is a publication of Place Consultancy that aims to bring community organisations regular relevant input on environmental sustainability and climate action. Contributions welcome!*