



The Urgent Need to Address Future Oil Scarcity in New Zealand

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*This is a guest post from **Tim Jones** of the Sustainable Energy Forum New Zealand.*

About 70 people attended the joint Engineers for Social Responsibility/Sustainable Energy Forum conference on "Responding to Oil Depletion and Climate Change" in Auckland on Saturday 26 July. Most of the conference presentations, plus the conference statement and report, are now available online at: <http://www.sef.org.nz/conferences.html#2008>

The conference was a resounding success. Those present accepted the urgent changes we need to be talking about, the mix of cold hard facts that we as a society find hard to face up to but also the hope for the future in the examples of local action in New Zealand communities on sustainable towns, and examples from abroad. Those present at the conference were deeply concerned at the lack of urgent action by the Government and most political parties on rising oil prices, peak oil, and climate change. The conference therefore agreed the following statement, in the hope of helping raise government and community awareness, and to help build a consensus for change.

1. This conference is concerned at the potential for serious and long-term disruption of the New Zealand economy and society from rising oil prices and climate change.
2. The conference accepts that the potential threat of climate change is now widely recognised and many people are being increasingly motivated to take action to mitigate its effects, though effective action by governments is slow. However the future threat to our way of life posed by depleting oil supplies and rising prices is still barely recognised and acknowledged by officialdom and most political parties in New Zealand.
3. The need to take action to prepare for future oil shortages and much higher prices is now urgent, as this will have a major and ongoing impact on our country over the coming decade and beyond. In contrast, early climate change impacts on New Zealand (though not necessarily elsewhere) are likely to be less serious.
4. The conference accepts, on the basis of international oil industry evidence available and provided at this conference, the seriousness of oil supply, price and security issues, and the likelihood of oil scarcity within the coming decade, as well as the need to reduce climate change gas emissions from transport.
5. The conference is aware of a number of ways in which the solutions to make our communities more resilient to diminishing oil supplies and rising prices already exist, and we encourage the Government to support these measures.
6. The conference believes that there is a need to investigate and facilitate the scope for autonomous action by communities, and local government and regional authorities, to develop

longer-term solutions for these issues. This could be a priority task for the new government elected at the end of this year and assisted through a participatory exercise by a commission with full authority to conduct its own inquiries.

7. In the run up to the general election, the conference calls on all political parties in New Zealand to explicitly outline how they will proactively govern to take full account of future oil depletion and climate change issues, focusing on the following:

- * Volatile and rising oil prices, and future oil supply, security and price issues.
- * The impact that these will have on the New Zealand economy and society
- * The actions needed now to help safeguard the future of New Zealand economy and society
- * How such actions will support reductions in New Zealand's climate change gas emissions from transport
- * Supporting the transition of New Zealand's towns and cities, and rural communities and farms, to a new sustainable future through empowering and supporting local community action.



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