

Signs of Change conference

Eco-My-Flat: Sustainable Behaviour Change in Student Flats

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This presentation explains the concept of the University of Canterbury Sustainability Office's 'eco-my-flat' competition, the results of the first three years of evaluations, and features stories of Most Significant Change captured by the students themselves on video.

The annual 'eco-my-flat' competition was devised by, and is run for, students at the University of Canterbury to support and encourage change to more sustainable behaviours in their flats. In 2010 the competition was run for the third time, with some significant modifications. These included a longer duration, more workshops, and a greater emphasis on community building than in previous years.

The evaluations undertaken by the Sustainability Office for the three years show not only the success of the competition each time but also the marked increase in positive behaviour changes with these recent innovations. We noted improvement against a range of domestic sustainability indicators (shower times, composting, use of bikes and busses etc), as well as willingness to engage with others about sustainability topics and an enhanced sense of 'belongingness' within what has become an 'eco-my-flat' community.

In 2010 the Sustainability Office engaged outside consultants Social Foci to help us refine our monitoring and evaluation programme for 'eco-my-flat'. We chose a participatory video approach to do a Most Significant Change evaluation after the competition had been completed. The students learned how to make a video, and then created short (one minute) pieces telling the story of the most significant change in their flats. These pieces communicate concrete evidence of the success of 'eco-my-flat' and, as reflexive stories, have themselves become parts of the on-going transformation of these student flatters into eco change agents.