

SMART HOMES

Marta Karlik-Neale,

Sustainability Consultant, URS New Zealand;
Nick Collins, General Manager, Beacon Pathway
Sherilyn, Adviser, Ministry for the Environment

The quality of our homes determines the amount of energy needed to keep us warm and the amount of water we withdraw from the environment. It also has impact on the local biodiversity, air quality, greenhouse gas emissions, and the health and well-being of people.

Recognising the importance of these issues, the Ministry for the Environment contracted the development of an on-line resource to encourage New Zealanders to improve the sustainability of their homes. The team lead by Beacon Pathway, URS and Consumer's Institute, and supported by Building Research and the Department of Building and Housing, launched the resource earlier this year.

The emphasis is on promoting the concept of “smart homes” - homes that are warm, healthy, deliver a great lifestyle, and are gentle on the environment. In the process of developing the resource, the team engaged with a wide group of stakeholders including the building industry and consumers to ensure that the website’s information was practical, reliable, accessible and could quickly lead to action.

This paper presents this exciting new resource and outlines the approach used to entice consumers (home occupiers) and industry (home providers) to learn more about what options they have to improve their homes. It also explains the partnership approach that was central to developing the resource and how this helped strengthen its success.

Importantly, this paper outlines the network of government and industry led sustainable building initiatives that this website is connected to. The aim is for these initiatives to trigger a transformation of the New Zealand residential building sector leading to higher quality, better designed, healthy, less resource intensive, and carbon neutral homes.

References: