

**Sustainable Tourism Adviser in (North Canterbury)
Regions 2009
Greenacres Motels Case Study, March 2010**



i. Business Vision

We believe in protecting and enhancing the beautiful environment of Hanmer Springs, an important Forest heritage site with two valuable high country public reserves on the doorstep and the well established thermal pools. To support this environment, our business is committed to improving environmental performance across all areas of our business, and in the hospitality service which we offer. Our sustainability is an ongoing journey which will improve with time and experience.

ii. Business Background

We offer motel accommodation, providing quality mid range accommodation for local and international travellers. This includes provision for small adventure tour groups and local family groups. We have 9x 1 and 2 bedroom Chalets, 4x spacious town houses and 1x 3bdrm Villa, all set in a unique quiet 2.5 acres of alpine gardens overlooking the Hanmer village and the mountains beyond.

The motel was established in the 1950s to provide accommodation to local visitors from the surrounding region visiting the thermal pools. We have had the lease for the motel for two years and currently have three staff (one full time and two part time), as well as myself and my husband. Peak season is from Nov to April, with small peaks in line with NZ and Australian school holidays, and our hours vary according to the season.

iii. Sustainable Business Practice

In the past year, we have introduced a raft of initiatives across most of the key areas within our business; too many to detail here, but indicatively:

We looked closely at our Policies/ procedures and have a written responsible tourism statement which includes a vision statement for our business. We have had great feedback from our guests (who read our business vision and environmental statement in our compendium), and our staff has come on board, evident in the dedication which they have to keeping the units clean and tidy and in the suggestions which they offer to us at our regular staff meetings.

We have encouraged our guests to sort their rubbish into a two bin system and separate off compostable waste into a kitchen bowl. This has increased the amount that is being recycled. We have still to collect precise data on exactly how much we are recycling and the cost involved in setting up the new system, but it has reduced our rubbish quantity (putting out 4 bins of general rubbish per week compared to approximately six last season). We have invested approximately \$1000.00 in getting our recycling practice up and running, it has only been working for two months but we are getting a great response from our guests.

I have become a member to the Hanmer springs business association which is involved in a number of projects to help support business in Hanmer. We are also looking at incentives to encourage businesses to have more sustainable business practices.

We have changed from small soaps and shampoos for guest complements to refillable pump bottles of biodegradable product. This has reduced the amount of rubbish in the rooms and sped up cleaning as there is no soap scum and the showers

are easier to clean. There has not been any negative response to the pump bottles in fact we have had a number of guests wishing to purchase the bottles.

When we first purchased the business I was concerned about the type of cleaning chemicals used and the amount which we used and I started to investigate more sustainable ways of cleaning our rooms. I came across Enyo cloths and invested in one set of cleaning cloths and trailed the system for 8 months. They cleaned the units to a higher standard than using chemicals, there was no rinsing off of the chemicals required, therefore a reduction in the amount of time spent cleaning each unit by 1/4, allowing us to maintain the current staff levels even though we have increased our bed nights, and so direct increasing our profitability. It is also easier and more pleasant to clean, so staff are a lot happier!

Our power bills are large due to heating old buildings in a cold climate especially in the winter when we are quieter, making cash flow a problem. We were at a loss as to how best to become more energy efficient. The STAR programme accessed us an Energy Audit, fully subsidised by MainPower. We identified where we can reduce our power usage quickly at little investment e.g. changing light bulbs, insulation of windows and doors, encouraging guests to use power wisely. The Audit was a great tool to have in discussions which our leaser and we have convinced him to invest some capital into upgrading the units heating, including installing heat pumps and Heat transfer units.

This year we purchased a mulcher, mulching new native plantings and existing gardens on the property, reducing the amount of water, weed spray or time spent weeding and the amount of green waste we take to the transfer station. We hope to eventually become a closed system in that we have no green waste going off the property.

We have designed a survey form to gauge customer satisfaction and so far we have had great feed back from our customers especially our overseas guests they have commented on the vision statement and really like the effort which we are putting in to recycle and reduce their waste.

iv. Analysis of Sustainable Business Practices

There has been an initial capital investment cost in introducing sustainable business initiatives, but the focus has seen us analyze the way we do business in general. As we are becoming greener, we are being leaner and becoming a more efficient business in all ways. Looking at staff management issues and procedures within the business whilst looking at becoming more sustainable has given me great joy as Greenacres has become a great place to work.

We think that we can over time be more energy efficient although this is going to be an ongoing project, incorporated as part of our upgrading programme for the motel and be done in conjunction with our leaser.

We also need the support of the local council. We have made a real effort both in time and money to get our waste to a more sustainable place and are frustrated by minimal incentives to encourage business to recycle, reduce or reuse.

v. Assessment of the STAR programme

We have really enjoyed being part of the STAR programme. It has jump started us to being a more sustainable tourism operator and gave us direction to more forward. The support and encouragement from Carol has been wonderful; it feels like having a teacher with me ensuring that I complete my deadlines! It has been great meeting other like minded tourism operators and exchanging ideas and stories. As a part of the STAR group, we know that we are not alone in our journey.

vi. Future plans and outlook

In May we have our second Qualmark assessment, and we hope to improve our current sustainable tourism standing (we'd really like to get a silver Enviro award). Our journey in becoming a more sustainable tourism operator is ongoing, and at times frustratingly slow, but we are really enjoying the journey as it is in line with our own personal environmental philosophy - to care for this planet, our beautiful country of NZ and the people in it.

Contact Details:

Rebecca Balemi (Manager)
Greenacres Chalets and Villas
84 Conical Hill Road
Hanmer Springs 7334
Ph 03 315 7125
Fax 03 315 7195
Email green.acersmotel@xtra.co.nz