

## Tips for sustainability entrants

Sustainability is good business but identifying it may not be so easy when we read the fine print in a contract. Simply take the current four primary covenants and ask your self “**Why is this house better than the norm?**”

The New Zealand Building Code spells out the minimum requirements for construction and design purposes. The key question is “how does this house exceed the minimum requirements” and “are those improved features able to be slotted into the sustainability covenants as outlined in the competition”?

Let’s look at the covenants individually but remember each one can be enhanced by innovation in any given situation.

1. **ENERGY EFFICIENCY** is best understood. Extra R values in the walls can be achieved easily and argon gas can be used in double glazing. Good orientation of the house to pick up solar gain and the entrapment of that energy through thermal mass is becoming common. Control against overheating in summer gains points, as does shading design on east, north and west elevations. Prudent use of tinted glass should not be over looked.

Water heating can accrue good points. Consider the quality and features of the cylinder and energy sources serving it. There can be several energy sources to the one cylinder for the energy conscious client. Energy sources other than fossil fuels will always pick up points.

Home heating/cooling systems contribute to scoring, as do low wattage lighting and other similar features.

2. **WATER** in many instances will be supplied by the Local Authority. Water collection and disposal may, in many situations, be less straightforward to gain points. Rural verses urban criteria are balanced for fairness under the competition, with judges asking “why is this house serviced to a better standard than the norm?” This includes septic tanks and effluent/grey water disposal. Other items considered include filters, low flow or aerating shower heads, and other water saving devices.
3. **AIR QUALITY** within the home is relatively straight forward to assess but there are plenty of points to be gained by innovation depending on the local environment.
4. **BUSINESS PRACTICE.** Key areas we focus on include waste minimisation, use of manufactured components, and health and safety.

**Waste Minimisation** is all about good on-site control and good business systems. Control of sub contractors’ waste is important as is disposal of excavated material and silt control. Most of the points here are picked up by on-site discussion but photos are a huge help to judges where a complicated site is concerned.

Another area for points accrual is the use of **manufactured components.** Judges will be asking “Why is this better than the norm?”

**Health and Safety** underlies all of the above. Judges will consider things such as use of low VOC paints or other health and safety features included in the home. Sometimes these will be obvious to the judges, but an informed builder available on-site during judging to explain them will also make the judging and assessment process a lot easier.

**Judges need good information in order to allocate the maximum points available. To assist with this you should include key information in your entry descriptive for judges, and most importantly have an experienced and knowledgeable builder on site when the judges visit.**

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