



The Greater East Tāmaki Business Association ([GETBA](#)) is among many BIDs walking the talk when it comes to its sustainability principles.

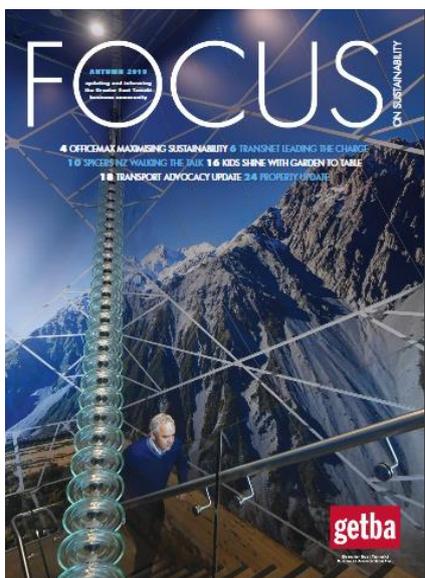
From waste minimisation programmes to EV initiatives, GETBA is playing its part in helping achieve one of the UN's 17 [Sustainable Development Goals](#).

We asked GETBA chairman – and sustainability champion - **Brendan Kelly**, pictured, to tell us more.

In one sentence, please describe what sustainability means to you.

Sustainability in business is simply about doing the right things; paying staff fairly, employing locally, managing your key inputs and outputs (assets, energy and waste) as efficiently as possible; running a business that is profitable, capable of investing in the future for its people (owners/stakeholders, customers and staff).

The UN has declared 17 [Sustainable Development Goals](#) – looking at **SDG #9 Industry, Innovation & Infrastructure**, what's GETBA doing to encourage East Tāmaki businesses to respond to this challenge?



GETBA ran a *Sustainability Forum* and we're exploring a sustainability special interest group as a result. We keep members informed on the topic and where to go for assistance through our various communications channels, including a FOCUS magazine issue (left) themed around sustainability. We held two showcase events in 2019 hosted by local businesses onsite highlighting best practice sustainability initiatives. We have participated in Auckland Council and ATEED workshops on sustainability and climate change for small business. We're working with our members to assist them to understand what they can do to reduce emissions: for SMEs usually it's the company trucks/vans that are the biggest area for energy efficiency. We also have a proactive waste minimisation workstream, assisted by funding from Auckland Council's Waste Minimisation and Investment Fund.



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



You've worked overseas as well as home in NZ: would you say NZ leads the way in sustainability or lags?

I think NZ slept on its 100% pure credentials while the world gained sustainability momentum. Between 2004-10, Europe made huge strides in recycling and energy transitions, and even legislation to sunset the production of carbon fuelled vehicles.

It seems like NZ has only woken up in the last three years and figuring out that everyone else has the jump on us now. Fortunately, we have the huge natural benefit of hydro and geothermal energy sources, but we need to go 100%, and be generating more clean electricity to power the future vehicle fleet.



What more could local and/or central government do to help businesses become more sustainable?



Legislate to sunset the carbon fuel vans, utes and lite trucks that make up our small business fleet.

Also, directing importing motor companies to develop, as a priority, electric commercial vehicles, and of course, incentivise businesses to speed up theirs.



What are the immigration work visa policy setting issues facing businesses?

The increase to the current visa settings to minimum income from \$52,000 to \$79,560 for residency is unsustainable. Most business in East Tāmaki don't have skilled visa-d employees paid salaries anywhere near this level. In addition, the current regional settings allocate an additional 30 visa points if you live outside the Auckland region. This is disadvantaging Auckland businesses.

There are 70,000 immigrants on work visas employed in NZ today who will not qualify to renew their visas in the next two years - and will be forced to leave the country.

Where are we going to find replacements for these people in that time frame? And where is the consistency and certainty for business planning?

It is limiting business growth.

. . . So, what needs to change to improve the situation for East Tāmaki businesses?

Auckland needs to be treated as a special region and not be penalised on the worker front for an old housing problem. We are losing staff to the other regions and, as such, Auckland is uncompetitive for visa applicants. The minimum salary requirements need to be dropped to the pre-October 2019 levels, i.e. skilled 53K.

Has GETBA been lobbying on this issue? If so, to whom and how?

With EMA, MPs, ministers...At our *GETBA Breakfast* last September with Finance Minister Grant Robertson, he was challenged directly with questions from the floor. At recent meetings with National's Simon Bridges and Christopher Luxon, we have raised the effect immigration settings are having on our members. We held a *Business Owners' Forum* on immigration in November when it was agreed immigration would be a key advocacy area in the build-up to the next election and that we will address our concerns through the EMA, and directly to the Immigration Minister and MBIE.

Finally, as Chair of GETBA, if you could achieve TWO things during 2020, what would they be?

- Get three companies to adopt solar energy generation on their commercial roof space (I know of my intention and one other!)
- Advocate for the government to change the immigration settings.

