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**NEWS RELEASE**

**Business leaders, community groups and local government step up to the challenge of reaching a new packaging product stewardship scheme for New Zealand**

Business leaders, community groups and local government met with Hon Dr Nick Smith Minister for the Environment at a public meeting on the 26<sup>th</sup> February 2009 to discuss the development of a new packaging product stewardship scheme to succeed the current Packaging Accord which will end in June this year.

The Minister told over 150 participants that he supported a collaborative approach to product stewardship with solutions based on smart economic and environmental policy and sound science. He outlined the Government's preference for industry to develop a voluntary scheme with ambitious but realistic targets. He said he expected the Packaging Council to lead the charge to develop the successor product stewardship scheme to the Packaging Accord.

Tony Nowell CNZM Chair of the Packaging Accord's Governing Board reiterated this message saying that there are two choices for New Zealand businesses:

"One is legislation; the other is a voluntary agreement. The Minister has made it clear he prefers us to sort ourselves out. If we are going to have a sensible relationship between everyone represented in this room –businesses, local government and communities– we need to work together to develop a voluntary product stewardship scheme to replace and improve the one we currently have.

"But we need to be practical. At a time of unprecedented economic instability, when industry and government are cutting budgets, we cannot afford to spend months and even years trying to reach an agreement."

The meeting represented the first public consultation to discuss the criteria and targets for a new packaging product stewardship scheme. Under the Waste Minimisation Act, product stewardship schemes can be accredited either as part of a voluntary process or mandated by the Minister assuming the schemes meet a set of criteria which are currently being developed by the Ministry for the Environment.

The Packaging Council of New Zealand has convened a small industry working group which will use the feedback collated at Thursday's public meeting to develop a product stewardship programme for packaging for further consultation. This group will have input from a wider group comprising industry, recycling operators and local government.

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