



**Press-Release: 14 May 2018**

## **HIDDEN BUILDING POLLUTION EXPOSED: NEW REPORT**

Much more must be done to tackle the amount of climate change pollution produced by New Zealand's buildings, suggests a new report released today by a team of international independent sustainability consultants.

The new report by thinkstep, who work with some of the world's leading companies, shows that New Zealand's built environment is culpable for belching out approximately 20 per cent of the climate change pollution emitted by New Zealand citizens.

Previous estimates, including last month's report by the Productivity Commission, suggested that our buildings were responsible for roughly five per cent of emissions – and maybe even as low as two per cent.

But the new report shows that buildings could amount to 20 per cent of New Zealand's carbon footprint when considering their lifetime 'embodied' emissions, and the products and services that New Zealanders consume – rather than those that are destined for offshore markets.

The new findings are hugely significant, says the New Zealand Green Building Council, who are backing the study, because it means that the Government should increase resources and efforts to reduce emissions from our buildings.

Buildings produce carbon pollution when using energy for things like heating and lighting, and also during their construction, when pollution is emitted through the extraction of raw materials and the manufacture of building products.

The thinkstep report arrives at the larger figure for the climate emissions of buildings than previous studies because it uses a different methodology, which is widely applied internationally and has been utilised by organisations such as the European Commission, Danish Government, the National Bureau of Economic Research in the USA, and Motu Economic and Public Policy Research here in New Zealand.

This approach differs as it allocates emissions to a sector at the point of consumption, rather than production, and because it considers the entire life cycle of buildings, including the extraction of raw materials, material production, the electricity and energy use of the building, and the treatment of construction waste.

Jeff Vickers, Technical Director of thinkstep in Australasia and lead author of the report, said: "Buildings and infrastructure are some of the longest-lived parts of our society, so it is crucial that we act now to reduce their contribution to climate change pollution – both through reducing emissions from energy used during the building's life and through reducing the emissions embodied in the building products that we choose. Embodied emissions are increasingly being provided by building product manufacturers through Environmental Product Declarations."

Sam Archer, Technical Director of the New Zealand Green Building Council said: "The Government is taking some very welcome steps to cut our levels of climate change pollution. But they really do need to do more to tackle the emissions of our buildings, which make up a significant portion of our overall pollution. If they do, they'll ensure that our families will live in a cleaner, less polluted Aotearoa, and will also ensure that we'll achieve our important international obligations to tackle climate change."

The full research report can be downloaded from: [reports.thinkstep-anz.com](https://reports.thinkstep-anz.com)

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## **About thinkstep Australasia**

thinkstep's mission is to enable organisations worldwide to succeed sustainably, by developing strategies, delivering roadmaps and projects, and implementing leading software solutions. We help large organisations such as Fletcher Building, Downer, New Zealand Steel and Lendlease to embed life cycle thinking into the design of building products, buildings and infrastructure. thinkstep Australasia is headquartered in Wellington and part of the global thinkstep group, with 300 sustainability experts worldwide.

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## **About the New Zealand Green Building Council**

The New Zealand Green Building Council is a team of passionate advocates for better buildings, because we know that better buildings mean healthier, happier Kiwis.

We do this by working alongside politicians, industry and other businesses to bring change.

We believe that all New Zealanders deserve to be safe, healthy and happy in our beautiful country – at home, at school, at work. Everywhere.

[www.nzgbc.org.nz](http://www.nzgbc.org.nz)