



# Sustainability is a mindset

**Miranda Struthers**

Accessible Energy Advocate at Electricity Retailers' Association of New Zealand

Miranda Struthers has collaboration and community in her DNA. As the Accessible Energy Advocate at the Electricity Retailers' Association of New Zealand (ERANZ) with its remit for social justice and fairness in the electricity sector, and a background as a community advocate, Miranda has long been thinking about what sustainability means for social equity.

"I joined ERANZ at an interesting time for consumers and the market during the electricity price review of 2018. At that time the sector brought together a diverse group of stakeholders working together for the benefit of consumers, and it's my responsibility to keep up the momentum, share the industry's successes and advocate on behalf of customers to make sure no one is left behind," Miranda explains.

It was the convergence of these opportunities that led Miranda to the 2021 Sustainability Leadership Programme (SLP), which she approached with social equity in mind, rather than environmental sustainability. "I was looking for a programme that would help me build my skills to engage in a

constructive, long-term way with a range of diverse stakeholders who are all facing unique challenges and with differing views on how to solve them.

"The SLP helped me see that collaboration is the key to influence, and it's not down to one person or organisation having all the answers," Miranda says.

A crucial component of the SLP programme for Miranda was the connections she made within the LeaderLabs, the small peer groups the participants worked in over the six-month course. "The connections we formed within our own group and interacting with the others was a great demonstration of the true nature of collaboration.

**“Collaboration is the key to influence, and it’s not down to one person or organisation having all the answers. It’s all about mapping out how people and organisations are connected and where you can join the dots.”**

We learned that you don't have to go about things in a linear fashion. Instead, it's all about mapping out how people and organisations are connected and where you can join the dots."

One of the key projects Miranda is working on is EnergyMate, a free in-home energy coaching service for households at risk of energy hardship that are struggling to pay their power bill or keep their home warm.

Miranda says the skills she learned through SLP are coming to the fore as she delivers EnergyMate and other energy wellbeing initiatives, engaging with a range of community groups, government and NGO stakeholders, and representatives from the large electricity companies. "Naturally everyone has their own way of doing things, and since I've completed SLP I feel more confident in my ability to build a fellowship and help all the stakeholders work together towards a shared goal of an equitable electricity market for all Kiwis."

The philosophy of fairness and working together as a community for the long-term benefit of New Zealanders isn't always an easy road. "Leading change can be uncomfortable, but with the support of SLP I learned how to get comfortable being uncomfortable. We learned it's ok not to have all the answers, and how to push back constructively which are vital tools to have in your kete as a leader at any level in an organisation."

Miranda says the programme proved that you don't need to have 'leader' or 'manager' in your title to benefit from the skills you learn. "Over the six months, I saw that sustainability is much more than a concept about the environment. It's about how we can grow a cohort of positive influencers that can meet the significant environmental and social challenges we are facing in Aotearoa, and how we can transfer those skills in our workplaces, to our families and inside our communities."



**“I feel more confident in my ability to build a fellowship and help people work together towards a shared goal.”**



The Sustainability Leadership Programme is Australasia's most comprehensive sustainability leadership course. Run in partnership by the [Sustainable Business Council](#) and [Catapult](#) this short course gives you the tools and confidence needed to make a measurable impact. [Find out more.](#)