

Media Release
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Ruru Specialist School embraces wood energy system

The success of wood energy systems in Southland is convincing more businesses and schools to choose environmentally-friendly biomass heating options.

One of the latest school to be reaping the benefits in a switch to Biomass is Ruru Specialist School, which had a wood energy boiler installed mid last year and has not looked back since.

Ruru Specialist School principal Erin Cairns said there were many factors that influenced their decision to change to the biomass system.

“It was the cleanest and greenest option, and eased any health and safety concerns we had for our students, community and the environment,” Cairns said.

Since switching to the new system there had been a huge change environmentally for the school, and their neighbours, she said.

“There is no smoke and the air is really clean, our neighbours have continued to comment on what a difference it has made to the air,” Cairns said.

As the IT teacher at Ruru Specialist School, Gill Ellison, has taken the reins of the boiler’s operations and has received training on how the system works.

The new system was very interesting as it produced a lot of useful data that could be further analysed, she said.

“Prior to switching to biomass our previous caretaker would have to come in every morning to do the cleaning and processing. Now I just have to log in once a week. It’s easy maintenance and so much cleaner,” Ellison said.

Having a sustainable energy source was very appealing, and cleaner air was very important, she said.

Ellison and Cairns both strongly recommended the biomass system for other schools looking to replace older boilers, saying the experience had been very straight forward and successful.

The change had generated plenty of interest amongst students and their parents and continues to highlight the benefits of the Wood Energy South Pilot programme.

The Wood Energy South pilot aimed to establish wood as a renewable energy source and help inform decisions around wood energy potential across New Zealand.

Although the pilot officially ran its course from 2014 -2017, Venture Southland group manager for business and strategic projects, Steve Canny said that there continued to be ongoing benefits for the Southland region as more schools and businesses explore the potential of biomass systems.

Venture Southland continues to provide support for businesses interested in switching to biomass.

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