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Recycling benefits schools



Plains Irrigators compliance officer Tim Warner, celebrating his company's success with its recycling efforts that has come with the bonus of more than 50 trees to be planted at Mid Canterbury schools. Photo Tetsuro Mitomo

What started out as just doing the right thing for the environment has led to an Ashburton company becoming a national recycling leader.

Plains Irrigators has become the first New Zealand business to join more than 4000 schools in a national programme, Paper4trees that encourages students to recycle paper and cardboard.

The schools are provided with an incentive to do the right thing

with their unwanted material by being rewarded for their efforts with free trees for their school grounds.

Plains Irrigators compliance officer Tim Warner said the idea of rewarding schools for their recycling efforts with trees dovetailed nicely with his company's belief in the importance of planting trees in rural areas to promote bee health and pollination, protect waterways and provide shelter for stock.

"That's what we're advising our farmers to do, but we needed to start in our own back yard and that's meant getting good recycling and waste minimisation systems in place in our own offices," he said.

Before it became a committed recycler, Plains Irrigators paid to have its wastepaper sent to landfill. Now paper and cardboard are taken to community recycler Wastebusters and the money saved will be spent on trees for schools, Mr Warner said.

When planting season rolls around in September, the company anticipates it will have about 50 trees to donate.

"Donating and planting trees ourselves just makes sense," he said.

Paper4trees programme manager Hope Lawsen said Plains Irrigators initially approached the programme because it wanted help to improve its in-house recycling but when it found out what Paper4trees did, they wanted to be part of their project.

That prompted the organisation to develop a package that will now be rolled out to other businesses.

"We are so impressed with this firm.

"It's such a shot in the arm to receive an approach like this, to realise businesses are willing to help us and the environment in this way."

Paper4trees is an environmental education programme run by EERST (Environmental Education for Resource Sustainability Trust), encouraging schools and preschools to reduce the amount of paper and cardboard waste they send to landfill.

It is a waste minimisation programme and the native trees and plants it gives away are an incentive to encourage schools to either start recycling, or improve current recycling rates.

– By Sue Newman