

Reasons why you should join CSRI

CSRI is a charitable trust whose sole responsibility is to educate and advocate for investment necessary for a safe, just and sustainable world. It is not a business association of people and organizations who have a vested financial interest in SRI. CSRI is able to take independent and critical stances based on robust scientific, economic, ethical and governance models and practices.

CSRI has a focus on New Zealand and has a track record of influence in changing investment criteria and behaviour in government, business, philanthropic and religious sectors. It sees these sectors as both part of the problem as well as the solution.

Our second conference in 2005 focused on the investing activities of the Crown Financial Institutions (CFIs) and how they were carrying out their responsibilities to invest so that New Zealand's international reputation was not prejudiced. Our research on the CFIs found that they were not significantly excluding anything, and carrying out no engagement. We found that they were all invested in tobacco, and companies with terrible labour and environmental records. On the day of our conference the Accident Compensation Corporation announced that they would divest from tobacco. After the Conference a number of the CFIs started to take their legislative responsibilities seriously, and exclude investment in certain activities such as whaling and landmine manufacture, and engaged with companies using UN criteria.

Following on from the 2005 conference on CFIs we worked with the Government and in particular, a private members bill sponsored by Maryan Street to change the legislation for CFIs. When she became Minister of ACC in 2007 she had to drop her bill, but she asked them what they would do differently if her bill had been passed. They replied *We would divest our investments in the nuclear weapons industry*. They subsequently did so.

The CFI legislation changes are still necessary. Since then the economic meltdown has caused us to critically examine the standard SRI model, and adopt a position that includes substantial reform of the financial sector. The ordinary New Zealand investor is not interested in the social and environmental impact of their investment if their investment has been lost because of a fraudulent financial sector. In 2009 CSRI ran workshops to factor this and global drivers into the risk calculation for investment. We also have upgraded our advice for individual investors.

Despite our successes, the majority of investment in New Zealand (and overseas) does not take into account the threats to the environment on which all life, including human life, depends. We have been researching ways in which investors can make a positive response to these challenges, to encourage a more robust risk analysis, and to support those companies that are developing goods and services relevant to ecological protection and enhancement. That is why you should join CSRI to support and work with us in our efforts for renewal and reform.