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## **Name change recognizes contribution of Gareth James to community waste management**

The Kate Valley Landfill has been renamed the **Kate Valley Landfill and Gareth James Energy Park** in recognition of the enormous contribution of Gareth James the Transwaste Director who has been involved in community waste management for over thirty years since the search for a suitable site for a landfill began in the 1990s.

A ceremony was held at the end of 2023 to announce the name change and unveil new signage at the entrance to the Landfill. Transwaste Canterbury Ltd (Transwaste) Chair Mr. Gill Cox says the re-naming recognises the outstanding contribution Gareth James (Gareth) has made to the development and management of Canterbury's community waste management facility over more than 30 years.

'It's rare in life to celebrate a person who, in his own quiet and unassuming way, has done so much for his community and communities across Canterbury in an essential service that we all take for granted and that's solid waste management', says Gill Cox. 'What people see when they visit the Kate Valley Landfill and Gareth James Energy Park is testament to Gareth's tenacity, his expertise as an engineer and manager, and his vision.'

Gareth, a civil engineer by training, was the Manager Services at the Waimakariri District Council, with responsibility for all the district's infrastructure and community services, when in 1991 the Resource Management Act (RMA) brought in new environmental requirements forcing the closure of the old-style rubbish dumps in Canterbury and New Zealand. Gareth took the lead when Canterbury councils formed a joint committee to plan for managing the region's waste. He travelled overseas to study first-hand how the best regarded landfills were developed and managed, to ensure Canterbury developed the best engineered and environmentally safe landfill.

By 1995 many of the councils in Canterbury had discovered the cost of providing new high-quality landfills wasn't affordable for their ratepayers. The solution was to be an innovative partnership bringing together the councils of Canterbury and the waste management expertise of the private sector in a pioneering joint venture. The councils invited private sector companies with recognised landfill experience to join the councils in a joint venture, called Transwaste Canterbury Ltd, to develop a single landfill for Canterbury in 1999. The joint venture partners are the councils of Christchurch, Ashburton, Hurunui, Selwyn and Waimakariri (who hold a combined 50% shareholding) and Waste Management NZ Ltd (who has the other 50% shareholding). A search for a suitable site began and once selected the Kate Valley Landfill opened on time and on budget in 2005.

The modern engineered landfill which safely manages community waste without harming the environment is a massive environmental improvement from the 50 or so unsafe dumps previously used by Canterbury communities. Gareth says though the resource consent process for the landfill was the largest and longest in New Zealand at the time, the results speak for themselves.

'Kate Valley has been recognised by New Zealand experts and has received the two highest awards for engineering excellence available in this country', says Gareth. 'Believe me, it is quite something when our peers in the engineering world recognise a landfill as being worthy of such awards. Kate Valley has the potential to safely look after Canterbury's waste for the next 150 to 200 years if it is needed. No other region in New Zealand has that security.'

Gareth was appointed General Manager of Canterbury Waste Services (CWS) which runs the day-to-day operations at the Landfill. Under his watch the systems used by the Landfill, such as containerised transport, were designed, developed and successfully operated says Cox.

'The landfill's operations have been stress tested on several occasions: earthquakes, handling earthquake demolition materials, economic crises, ever increasing environmental and regulatory requirements, and of course a pandemic', says Cox. 'Not once has that system, designed, developed and implemented by Gareth, faulted or indeed been threatened.'

Gareth advocated extracting additional value from the solid waste handling and disposal process, by using captured landfill gas to produce electricity. As the Landfill is constructed a network of pipes is installed to collect the methane produced by decomposing organic material. The gas is drawn out of the Landfill and used to drive generators to produce electricity. Four generators produce about 4MW. As waste continues to decompose increasing volumes of methane will be produced. Cox says at its peak the Landfill methane gas is expected to generate 8MW, enough to power 8,000 homes.

'Gareth championed the production of electricity, and the investigation of other uses for the energy produced by the landfill such as the production of hydrogen for powering heavy transport and construction equipment', says Cox. 'It's because of Gareth's leadership what used to be a landfill is now viewed as a Landfill and Energy Park, one of the largest producers of 'green energy' in Canterbury. That's why we've changed the name to recognize its changing role and importantly the person who challenged us to derive more economic, social and environmental benefits from our community's waste.'

From 2010 until 2021, when he retired, Gareth was General Manager South Island for Waste Management NZ Ltd, which is a 50% shareholder in Transwaste and owns CWS. Gareth became a director of Transwaste in 2010 a role he continues today.