Kia ora tatou

This parade, this celebration, is one enormous thank you to the Highlanders team.

Thank you for giving us and all our southern communities so much reason to be proud of you and your achievement. Because pride is what this is about. Pride from the whole of the south, from Dunedin, Invercargill, Central - all of Otago/Southland - pride in you as our team and your win on Saturday in Wellington.

We are incredibly proud of you all, but not just for winning. We are proud of the WAY you won - with discipline and composure. And not just that one game. You have been building up to this success over a long period of time. Go back a year, six months, even 3 months, and few outside the South would have believed you could be in Wellington on Saturday, let alone win.

The past couple of years have had their share of disappointments and a few missed opportunities. But despite the setbacks, the team kept quietly building skills, building self-belief, building the whole of team effort. Concentrating on the so-called soft skills as much as the physical ones.

So Saturday’s win was the triumph of:
- Self-belief over doubt;
- Confidence, albeit quietly held, over negativity;
- Discipline over disorder;
- Team work over relying on a few stars.

Actually you are all most definitely stars, but you played as a team.

So thank you and congratulations on your enormous achievement - an achievement that you have patiently been building up to for so long and with such understated determination. You backed yourselves and didn’t lose that belief in the face of sometimes ferocious pressure.

Thank you also to all your support team, management and coaches – to Jamie and Tony and all their team. This is an extraordinary credit to you all as well. Thank you.

You provide all of our Southern communities with a fantastic example of what is possible when we all work together with a positive sense of self belief and back ourselves.