Welcome to you all. Thank you for coming out to welcome home, congratulate and thank our magnificent Champion Highlanders team. Of course a special welcome to the champions – our champions – the Highlanders. This parade, this celebration, is one enormous thank you to you.

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

We are not just proud of you 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 at the final on Saturday, let alone win. It would be understating it to say you were not the favourites.

Indeed, 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 not just on the obvious physical skills, but on the so-called soft skills as well.

So Saturday’s win was the triumph of:
- Self-belief over doubt (other peoples doubt as it turns out);
- Of confidence, albeit quiet, over negativity;
- A triumph of discipline;
- A triumph of team work rather than relying on a few stars; actually you are all definitely stars but you played as a team.

So thankyou 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 some pretty ferocious pressure.

A huge thank you and congratulations also to all your support team, management and coaches – to Jamie Joseph and Tony Brown and all your back-up team. This is an extraordinary credit to you all as well. Well done all of 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. You have done so well.

Thank you and congratulations once again from the whole southern community.

Kia or a tatou.