Kia ora tatou

This march and the pleas we are all making are not new.

Concern about the effects of climate change, like sea level rise and extreme weather events have weighed more and more heavily on the minds of people all over the world, for some 20 years.

And people all over the world have urged their governments to take action – to recognise each government’s responsibility to set targets for carbon emission reduction that have a chance of achieving what was needed – of giving the world a chance to stay below the critical 2 degrees temperature increase level.

Our government – and no doubt others – has responded with the argument that the costs to our economy of taking ambitious action outweighed the likely risks of climate change to this country. It’s a fanciful idea that we could HAVE an economy when the rest of the world had roasted theirs – but it has been possible to believe that climate change was something that affected OTHER parts of the world far more directly and imminently than us – than Dunedin, New Zealand.

Places like Kiribati, Greenland and Bangladesh.

That was up to a fortnight ago. Then the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment released her report on sea level rise – much of which uses the scientific work of our own scientific agency NIWA.

That report brings the reality of climate change right back home here, literally to our doorstep. Not only are the effects of climate change impacting on New Zealand – they are impacting worse here in Dunedin than anywhere else in New Zealand, both in severity and extent and will get worse.

This is impacting OUR community NOW. I want action and I want it yesterday.

Because the slower the response of world governments in achieving meaningful and effective carbon emission reduction targets, the worse it will be for the people of South Dunedin, Brighton, for the Harbourside area – Warrington and Waitati. US!

Actually we haven’t all been silent till now. Councils all over New Zealand are keenly aware of the challenges we face due to the impacts of climate change.

The Commissioner’s report reinforced and clarified what we already knew. And across New Zealand, local government leaders united some months back to push for urgent and more
ambitious Government action to address the effects of climate change at the Paris talks starting tomorrow.

The Local Government Leaders Climate Change Declaration announced last month is a collective recognition led by Mayors of larger cities of the need for urgent action to address climate change for the benefit of future generations.

In the declaration, mayors have committed to a range of actions including developing and implementing action plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and support resilience within our own local communities.

In Dunedin, Council has already taken some measures in response to the effects of climate change. They include:

- **A socially responsible investment policy** – divesting our shares in fossil fuel companies. Because how could we be trying to use less fossil fuel and at the same time be producing more of it? Apart from the moral issues involved, it doesn’t seem very bright to be investing in producing more of something that everyone knows we must encourage less demand for.

- Encouraging **cycle use** – we are developing the city's cycle network and encouraging cycling as a means of transport, as well as campaigns to make it safer.

- We have an **Energy Plan** which aims to save costs and enhance quality of life resulting from energy-efficiency improvements, and reduce the city's climate change and environmental effects.

- The **Cosy Homes Project** which has the goal of making sure everyone in Dunedin lives in a warm and cosy home by 2025.

- The **Green Island Landfill** has a waste to energy gas collection system to capture methane gas emissions for beneficial use rather than let it escape with damaging effects.

- And in terms of dealing with climate change effects there's a range of work underway or coming up around **sea level rise**. Clearly this has come into full focus now. That work includes exploring potential protection options, looking at raising minimum floor levels, and considering the possible impacts of sea level rise in our proposed Second Generation District Plan.

But we can't do it all on our own. And frankly those measures are simply band-aids on a problem that is getting worse and that we know will continue to get worse for some time regardless of what we do. We need to slow down the problem. We need commitment at a national and international level for far more urgent and ambitious action.

Climate change is going to cost this community a great deal of money, a great deal of dislocation and a great deal of anguish – whatever we do. The sooner people and governments around the world take action to slow down the galloping effects of climate change, the sooner things here and elsewhere on planet Earth will stop getting worse. The sooner we act, the sooner we will be able to get a handle on what the effects will ultimately be and try to deal with them.

Thank you for your efforts in helping to put this issue at the forefront of the minds of local, national, and international leaders. The time to act is now.