

DRAFT 4

Speech HWTM "Valuing Otago Peninsula" Conference Friday 12 October 2007

I offer the congratulations and best wishes of the city to the Yellow-eyed Penguin Trust on its 20th Anniversary. Thank you for your invaluable work in caring for the penguins bringing awareness to the community and contributing to the economy of Dunedin.

I cannot begin to describe the very real affinity I have with those of you gathered here concerned about the future of the Otago Peninsula and its many inhabitants - for I, too, am an endangered species!

This could be my last official speech as Mayor of Dunedin. Tomorrow at noon the big clock above the Municipal Chambers will chime 12 times and my life goes into limbo until the votes are counted, after which I may retain my position or spend the rest of my days checking on the discounts available on the gold pension card, kindly supplied by Winston, and going to the movies for half price.

So there is, I suggest, no one more keenly interested in preserving and protecting what we've got and nurturing it for the enjoyment of future generations than I.

Not, I hasten to add, that I expect charitable trusts to be set up to secure my future.

The best I can hope for is that this is one Chin that Dunedin doesn't want to be rid of!

Fortunately, as mayor of the so-called 'Wildlife capital of New Zealand' I can face you all with a clear conscience knowing that my council has recently adopted a bio-diversity strategy which sets out a vision for the

city of how we believe a responsible custodian of the region's environment and how its man-made resources should co-exist in harmony with its natural ones.

Anne Cheng, our Planning Policy Manager, and later in this conference, Debbie Hogan, a Planner with the Dunedin City Council, will be addressing you in detail on the role of the Dunedin City Council in biodiversity conservation, but in the meantime, please indulge me as I share with you my views of our strategy.

The Council's bio-diversity strategy commits Dunedin to being a community which, along with its constituent parts, works together to enhance and celebrate the value of bio-diversity for the benefit of current and future generations; and which maintains a network of viable habitats and eco-systems across our city - which is, by the way, the largest by area in New Zealand extending from the alpine zone of the Rock and Pillar Range in the west to our harbour, the coastline and islands of the Peninsula.

That document sets out the City Council's commitment to our future - but it will need the participation and understanding of all of us, our children and their children, to ensure we are able to preserve and enhance what we already have.

For such visions to work they have to bring balance to the competing demands for space and resources.

They have to make sense and be acceptable to a range of interests which is why we were at pains to ensure our vision included all who live in the city - flora, fauna, and us!

And balance was, is and always will be the key word.

There's no point in building four lane highways so that tourists and residents can stream across the Peninsula to look at its wildlife if, in

doing so, they destroy or scare off the very attraction which draws them here in the first place.

Similarly, encouraging housing development along the coastal margins is all very well - but not if it means increased levels of pollution of our wildlife's habitat with polystyrene packaging, plastic shopping bags and drink bottles and nylon nets - all of which pose a threat to those species we're supposed to be sharing Planet Earth with.

Let me be quite clear where I'm coming from, and let me at the same time challenge one of the commercial shibboleths surrounding the exploitation of the natural wonders abounding in our city.

We shouldn't be working to preserve the habitats of the Yellow-eyed Penguin, or the albatross, or the fur seals or the native flora - nor, even the introduced species of salmon which call the harbour home - just because these accidents of Nature are good for the economy.

We should be doing all we can, and more, because we should inherently value these life forms as special gifts - as taonga because they (salmon aside) truly were here first.

It was they, when all's said and done, who first discovered Otakou and who made it their home long before we arrived on the scene - long before the tangata whenua and the Europeans sailed into a gap in the coastline and said: "This looks OK. Drop anchor!"

But on the Otago Peninsula we also have a most important partner and ally - Te Runanga Otakou.

On the one hand legislation is in place that requires us to consult with manawhenua. Indeed the Dunedin City Council, at the end of last year, entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with both Kati Huirapa Runaka Ki Puketeraki Incorporated and Te Runanga O Otakou Incorporated. The Memorandum binds the parties to work together and

defines mechanisms to promote and facilitate effective consultation and liaison.

But on the other hand I question why, in relation to the Otago Peninsula, anyone with the interests of the region at heart would need legislation or Memoranda of Understanding compelling them to work with manawhenua.

Their association with the whole Otago Peninsula goes back generations and, indeed, back to the dawn of human settlement in this area. Their history needs to be recorded, preserved and made available to everyone.

There are various community volunteer organisations working on the Peninsula – the Otago Peninsula Trust, your own Yellow-eyed Penguin Trust and Save the Otago Peninsula to name but a few. There are commercial operations. There is DOC and there is the DCC, as well as farmers, life style investors – all with an interest in the Otago Peninsula, whether from a biodiversity economic tourist or other perspective.

This conference, with its array of authoritative speakers and commentators, together with you the registrants, will, I hope, be able to influence in a positive way the future of the Otago Peninsula.

It is my hope that our Maori history is interwoven with the presentation of the Otago Peninsula into the future and that the Dunedin City Council will continue to show leadership in working with all those with an interest in this special part of our city.

At Council we have recognised the need to balance the requirements of farming, tourism, forestry, fishing alongside the needs of those who don't have a voice.

To this end the DCC has been actively involved with the Yellow-eyed Penguin Trust at the Okia Reserve for a decade now. The Reserve itself

is jointly owned by the Council and the Trust and is managed by a committee which includes landowners, DOC and - most importantly as I've already said - Te Runanga Otakou.

On-going activities at the Reserve which the DCC supports are pest and weed control, replanting and maintenance of native flora and the monitoring of penguins and other species.

The success of the Okia Reserve owes much to a carefully considered management plan which takes account of the needs of all parties in its future development and administration.

Similarly, my Council's District Plan clearly identifies the Peninsula as "Outstanding Landscape of national and international significance."

We are committed to doing our best, not for any pecuniary return but because we accept we have a duty to preserve, for generations to come, our abundant natural resources.

There are many other individual businesses and voluntary groups who support the Yellow-eyed Penguin Trust, the organisers and our hosts for this conference which is part of their 20th Anniversary celebrations. This support comes in a variety of ways, all of which are, I am sure, appreciated by the Trust.

In particular though, and without down playing the support of others, I would like to acknowledge and commend the contribution of Mainland to the Trust.

Mainland has been a major sponsor of the Yellow-eyed Penguin Trust since 1989 and over this period, well over 1 million dollars has been raised through their Barcode Redemption Scheme, which ensure that the purchase of any Mainland products will ensure that some part of that purchase price will benefit the Yellow-eyed Penguin Trust.

Mainland has invested a substantial amount of resource into raising the profile of the Trust and the plight of the Yellow-eyed Penguin, and all those of my vintage will remember the iconic television commercials featuring Roy, an icon synonymous with Mainland in the 80s and early 90s, (and which continue to-day) a Yellow-eyed Penguin demonstrating Mainland's commitment to the cause.

Mainland has also produced an 80-page resource kit that can be used in schools, dealing with environmental issues, which is now a required part of the school curriculum. Mainland's work, not only raises funds, but educates us and creates a sense of community and empowerment of people, so I encourage you as supporters of the Trust, to eat a block of cheese a day.

There is one profession that seems to be even less trusted than politicians – lawyers. I’m a lawyer by training. In my experience most people, sometime in their lives - and usually later rather than sooner - make provision for the transfer of assets they’ve accumulated to their loved ones.

As a lawyer and, by virtue of the ballot box an endangered species, I urge you all to vote. Vote for the preservation of all that Nature has entrusted to our care so that those who follow may enjoy those gifts of Nature which give us so much pleasure today.

Vote for the commitment of all the diverse interests represented in this conference to work together to nurture and value all that is precious for those who come after us.

Thank you for listening to me.