

Speech

Larnce Wichman

Prime Minister John Key, Minister of Conservation Nick Smith, Director General of Conservation Lou Sanson, Sir Mark Solomon, honoured guests and above all members of Te Korowai - thank you. This acceptance by Government of our Strategy is a huge thing for us. It validates all the hard work, and the compromises and commitments we, and our community, have made to look after the marine environment of Kaikoura.

Today is a day for thanks. It is a day of completion and a day of new beginnings.

When we presented the Strategy to Government we asked Ministers to support it in principle and to direct your officials to work diligently and speedily with us. You certainly have done this, and while those officials did not look comfortable to be operating with a fire under their tails, they performed ably under pressure and with high levels of professionalism. We are very grateful to you for going into bat for us and to Colin King our local MP who has supported us throughout.

I want to acknowledge the work of Forest and Bird, particularly Kaikoura local Barry Dunnett, in initiating steps to protect the Kaikoura coast in 1992 with their application for a marine reserve. Twenty-two years is a long time, and Barry has remained constructively engaged through every phase.

I applaud the leadership of the local Ngati Kuri iwi in working with DOC to initiate the wider Te Korowai process that brought the focus to dealing with all of the issues of the Kaikoura coast. We are deeply grateful for the role of Sir Mark Solomon in gaining Government support and resolving issues along the way. All of this would not have happened without the support of the Department of Conservation and many Ministers, nor without their funding the process for the first 5 years from an already stretched budget.

Most especially, I want to thank the members of Te Korowai for your commitment, willingness to work together, to stand together, and above all to become visible leaders in our community. You put in the hard yards and believed that we could succeed. You were prepared face up to the issues and listen to each other and to work robustly with the people that placed you here. And as Te Korowai I include the members of the agencies, locally, regionally and nationally. You all have done amazing work particularly those few stalwarts that have been with us through the whole process.

Also, without the funding from DOC, Ministry for the Environment, KDC, the Canterbury Community Trust and Ecan we could not have had the professional support to get us to where we are today. The staff of DOC, KDC, Ecan, Ministry for the Environment and the Ministry for Primary Industries have supported Te Korowai with advice, information, practical services and with patience and good humour. Local fishers, commercial, cultural and recreational, environmental groups, researchers and ordinary Kaikoura people have supported us with their advice, knowledge and good will. Thank you all.

We knew it was a big thing to ask Government for special legislation, but it was the only way to preserve the integrity of the Strategy as agreed by the community. All of the legal changes need to be implemented at the same time so that the gifts and gains of the different sectors could be respected.

We have been briefed this morning on the Bill to be introduced to Parliament. We are satisfied that it preserves the intent of the Strategy. There will be details that we will work through with the Select Committee. What really matters to us is the recognition of the role of people with generational commitment to the place as guardians or kaitiaki. What we have stood for here is local leadership. This has led us in new directions, beyond sustainability to abundance and proactive care. We will want to be assured that the details of the Bill adequately recognize this and sufficient authority is given to the local community to continue to lead.

We do think there are lessons here for other communities and for the country as a whole. The core lesson that I have learnt today is that taking responsibility for your local environment will be rewarded with recognition and authority. Government has decided to have the community agreements ratified and implemented.

Of course the legal aspects are only half the story. We will be working with people locally on implementation for decades to come. We have been assured by Environment Canterbury and the Kaikoura District

Council of their support in implementing matters under their jurisdiction. This will involve another chapter of inquiry and discussion for our community integrating management of land and sea. Having the special legislation in place with clear statutory recognition of the importance of Kaikoura will underpin that next level of planning.

The next steps will require effort, resources and ongoing support locally and nationally. We are confident that we will need help of every person in this room to be able to succeed in caring for our coast. We are equally confident that support will be forthcoming.

Right now though it's time to celebrate and then to work to see the special legislation safely through Parliament. I thank you one and all for what you have done, what you are doing today, and for becoming with us, guardians of this unique marine environment.