

Waikato Scenarios – Nature Counts

Narrative Story – “A day at the Waikato Chronicle”

Waikato Chronicle

It is the Waikato

‘50 by 2050’ celebrates success



Politicians and business leaders celebrate

Champagne flowed last night as leading scientists, politicians and business people celebrated New Zealand’s achievement in the ‘50 by 2050’ campaign at Hamilton’s Waikato Innovation Park. The New Zealand Government and the Cairns Group for liberalisation of global agricultural trade signed an agreement with the global science network, Coalition of the Concerned (CoC), back in 2012. The key thrust of the agreement was to develop 50 new technologies by 2050 “to improve human health through improvements to agricultural practices and the natural resource base”.

Speakers at last night’s lavish affair lauded the New Zealand ag-biotech science and business community for its achievements since 2012, citing the carbon capture and storage innovations as “world-changing”. National commentators claim that the 2050 campaign, together with the Government’s introduction of the ‘one planet, three decades’ policy in 2016, has led to an exponential improvement in the natural environment. The revolutionary 2016 legislation requiring all New Zealanders to reduce their ‘five-planet’ footprints to ‘one-planet’ over the past 30 years provided an additional catalyst for innovation in environmental technologies.

Development of agricultural techniques to enhance natural ecosystems, such as the carbon-capturing organic maize cropping system, has cemented the Waikato as the hub of ag-biotech development in the Australia-Pacific region. “The current influx of talented people coming to work at Innovation Park is a reflection of our successes to date,” says CEO Ed Meadows, “The Waikato is the place to be for aspiring ag-biotech farmers, technicians and scientists in Australasia.”

Critics of the 2050 campaign and the Government’s parallel focus on legislating to ensure every New Zealander limits their ‘footprint’ say that the social cost has been too high. According to Waikato Social Services spokesperson Wendy Steffen, high housing costs and tax rates, coupled with a reduction in spending on social services has led to significant

Alternative schooling remains on the fringe

Auckland’s trend away from the formal schooling system towards child-led education ‘safe places’ is not being duplicated in provincial centres such as Waikato and Canterbury, according to a study released today by the Ministry of Education. The study highlights that less than 7% of Waikato students have changed over to the new interest and talent-based school system, compared with 25% across NZ and 75% in Auckland.

Waikato parents seem to be considerably less comfortable with education’s role in the ‘new social contract’ being encouraged by the Government. “The idea of education based on shared experiences and talent development is all very well, says Huntly mother of three Shenae Hemi, “but what about when it comes to getting a job and surviving effectively in the real world?”

Collaborative programmes, such as the University of Waikato’s partnership with Landcare Research to provide secondary education in ecological responsibility, are working to bridge this gap. The five-year old programme is a world leader in valuing the ecosystem services of different land uses and is placing up to five graduates a month in permanent employment. “The development of the Eco-Allocation system to pay farmers for the ecosystem services provided by their land has been a real coup for our students,” reports the Ecol-Response Programme’s leader, Shaun Barrett.

rural poverty in the Waikato. “Small rural towns like Tokoroa and Kawhia are being forgotten in this no-holds-barred push for sustainability. Sure we’ve made great progress in improving the way we use resources and the environment but our people are suffering, especially in rural areas that are isolated from the successes of Hamilton. We need to put some balance back into the equation.”

NZ GPI sees small rise for March quarter

Statistics New Zealand this morning confirmed market expectations for a weaker economic start to the year. The resource productivity-based measure GPI (genuine progress indicator) increased by only 0.2 per cent on-quarter in the three months to March 31, Finance Minister Michaela Kulani said today.

Economic commentators have emphasised over the past two decades that the move away from a per-capita GDP measure would mean slower rises in living standards. “The positive reality is that today we are taking into account the amount of real wealth produced per unit of natural resource consumed. Incomes and profit are no longer falsely inflated by

reckless plundering of our environment” asserted Dr Kulani.

In response to criticism from the National Council of Social Services about the lack of spending on social services, Dr Kulani announced the Government’s intention to convene a taskforce on poverty and social inequity across the country. “We have to recognize that there is an inevitable social cost to repaying the ecological debt New Zealanders have incurred over the past century. Now that the environment is recovering, the time is right to focus more on increasing living standards within our one-planet means.”

News in brief

Urban renewal of Flagstaff approved



Flagstaff renewal – artists impression

The ageing Hamilton suburb of Flagstaff has been approved this week for an urban renewal project by the Hamilton City Council. Council planner Brian Heta told the Times this morning that the project would include higher density infill housing, multi-level recreation spaces and small retail and office clusters to reduce transport needs. Subsidies will be available for home-owners to meet new zero-energy, zero-carbon and smart-tech standards, assisting with renovation costs of installing improvements such as triple glazing and solar-collecting drapes. Innovative re-use of the abandoned big-box stores built in the 2000s is also included in the project.

New VR ‘cabin’ on the market today

MacroHard released the long awaited virtual reality cabin VR6 to the market this morning and Waikato consumers were quick to respond. The new VR6 is compact at just 2 metres tall and 2 by 2 metres wide, and collapses down into a backpack for easy relocation. New VR6 owner Paul Danby reported this morning “I can’t wait to put my VR6 up at home. The enhanced nervous system capacity will make a huge difference to my virtual social life. It will be a real buzz to actually feel virtual handshakes, although it might be a bit scary when I take a hit gaming.” While VR6 users will experience virtual physical contact at a greatly enhanced level, MacroHard developers assure consumers that their pain-sensing blocks are foolproof.



Spherical VR6