

Helen Clark Foundation Launch Event Speech Notes

Hello everyone, my name is Kathy Errington and I am the Executive Director of the Helen Clark Foundation.

Thank you all for coming out tonight after what has been a terrible week for New Zealand, and for the world. Like many of you, I have been trying to make sense of what happened last Friday, and have struggled to do so. All I can offer is that we will work as hard as we can to do our part to make NZ a better place, where things like this can't happen.

I am conscious that we will need help to realize the big ambitions we have for the foundation's future. The Helen Clark Foundation aims to be a respected voice in New Zealand policy debates, able to support a wide range of researchers and students.

For now, of course though it is early days. Many of you may wonder what the foundation is? The short answer is that we are a think tank, trying to make NZ a better place to live. We do that by researching the problems we face, and proposing solutions. It is a goal we approach with a renewed sense of urgency.

We will host events connected to these reports so that we can promote our perspective and learn from all of you. Practical ways you can help us include collaborating on reports, co-hosting events to discuss the issues covered and helping distribute what we do on social media.

For the early part of this year, we will focus on the environment and climate change issues. Our first report, available here tonight for those who are interested, focuses on the potential for green hydrogen in NZ as we look to decarbonise our economy.

We argue that green hydrogen can be a new export industry, as well as domestically having a role to play in areas where electrification is impractical or impossible, and also that hydrogen can help NZ deal with intermittent renewables.

I will be hosting a seminar about my paper on 3 April for anyone keen to discuss this issue in more detail. I will spare you from a long explanation now while I'm keeping you from the bar.

In all seriousness, while the foundation launches today, this is only the start. I ask each of you here today to work with the Foundation to help us develop this new project. Please let us know what works, what doesn't, and what else you would like to see. This project has been a collaboration from day one – drawing on the experience of our patron Helen Clark, as well as the wider network of New Zealanders who would like to see a well informed, non partisan but progressive think tank to be part of the policy landscape in New Zealand. We will only succeed if we continue to work together. So please contact me if you have ideas.

We have been very grateful for the generous support of AUT and the Policy Observatory, who have partnered with us for this initiative. Vice Chancellor Derek

McCormack, our Dean Mr Pare Keiha, and Dr Julienne Molineux thank you all for your support.

I'd also like to thank Andrew Chen, David Lewis and Rowen Waterworth who have all supported me in very practical ways since I began my role in early February. I could not have done it without you all. We are grateful to BrandKnew who supported us to create our website – please check it out, our hydrogen report is also available there.

To finish I'd like to thank Helen Clark, Dr Peter Davis and the board for giving me such an amazing opportunity. Helen Clark was elected Prime Minister the year I started high school, and like many other women my age I felt invested in her success, not that she especially needed help from teenagers in suburban Christchurch. But we always thought that she was on our side, and we were grateful for it. It's an honour to contribute to her legacy through the foundation.

Without further ado I'd like to welcome Helen Clark to say a few words about the need for think tanks in NZ, and the role our organisation can play. Thank you very much and I look forward to meeting you all