

I have been actively engaged in climate science for the past 16 years. I have a good understanding of the fundamental science (sufficient to teach a university course in Climate Change) and am actively contributing to furthering understanding as a physical oceanographer working in Antarctica.

I have been sharing my knowledge and experience with a broad range of audiences via social media channels and speaking directly to various groups. Overwhelmingly, my audiences are grateful for the presentation of basic information on climate change, and the opportunity to ask their questions of a scientist directly. None of the information that I present is controversial, having been available in the public domain for many years. And yet for many, my presentations are the first time they've been shown and have understood the very basic science that clearly shows the effect of humanity's actions on our planet's climate. After investing just 40 minutes with them, I find myself in conversations in which there is real concern for the state of the planet, and a desire to make changes for the benefit of future generations.

As someone who is entrenched in climate science on a daily basis, this is obviously a highly-rewarding experience, and feels like a valuable use of my time. However, I also find it quite alarming to discover how little of the understanding and urgency has filtered out to ordinary people. Since they've never had the basics explained before, people are understandably disengaged from the issue. They cannot see the connection between reports of death and destruction caused by something labelled 'climate change' and their own actions, and in my experience, have been left feeling confused, overwhelmed, helpless or paralysed.

This convinces me that there is only a minority who are actively absorbing and integrating information on climate change, and in general the need to make changes on an individual basis simply does not feature in the lives of everyday people. However, there is not time to wait until everyone in the country (or indeed the world) has been brought up to some minimal level of understanding and is on board with making the necessary changes. The sooner and more drastic the changes, the better the long-term outcome will be. It is therefore necessary for our leaders to make a strong statement, based firmly in solid science. Those who know best have an obligation to present an example for the rest to follow, and those who have the power to influence others' behaviour should be using it.

New Zealand has an opportunity to make a difference on the world stage here. The rest of the world are looking to New Zealand to take strong and decisive action to show the importance that we place on climate change as the key scientific, political, socio-economic, and inter-generational issue facing the world today. As well, it could be argued that we are in the best position to do so, meaning that it would be a critical

mistake, with repercussions for the whole globe and centuries into the future, if we fail to do so.

At present, New Zealand has a strong and internationally-respected Prime Minister, who also enjoys a high level of popularity at home. Our electricity network is already largely renewable, our land is not over-populated, and the year-on-year variability of our climate is relatively benign (being tempered by the ocean). In addition, we are already facing flooding, coastal erosion, seawall inundation, more droughts, fewer frosts and the necessity of changing crop cycles, meaning that there is a greater appetite for change than ever before.

As a nation, we therefore have very little excuse to continue on a path of least resistance and slow change. I urge our leaders to find the courage to take a tough stance and push for action today that might require significant (although relatively minor) lifestyle changes today, but for which future generations will thank them.