

13 October 2019

**Climate Change and Business Conference, Auckland, 8-9 October 2019
Conference Communiqué**

This year's Climate Change and Business Conference concluded with a wide-ranging address by Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern who affirmed the Government's intention to enact the Zero Carbon Bill before year end. Her address bookended the announcement by Climate Change Minister Hon James Shaw at the beginning of the conference of the appointment of Dr Rod Carr as Chair of the Climate Commission, an appointment that was widely supported.

National's Climate Spokesperson Hon Scott Simpson raised questions about whether bi-partisan support for the Bill was likely, citing concerns about the proposed methane reduction targets and their impact on farming. Questioning pointed out the importance of maintaining a clear and consistent road map towards net zero by 2050.

A range of conference workshops focused on sectors with the most attended one examining finance. Clearly funding the transition to net zero has attracted some deep analysis and is now mainstreamed into the banking and financial services sector.

Other workshops examined the burgeoning debates around food and diet and its implications for emissions. During the plenary the Chia Sisters outlined a simple framework for how they made their drinks export business carbon neutral. Tourism was another focus with concerns expressed around its emissions and longer-term implications for the sector.

A breakfast session hosted by the Institute of Directors examined directors' responsibilities and potential liabilities around the boardroom table. The Aotearoa Circle, it was said, is releasing an important legal opinion on those responsibilities shortly. That didn't stop one director from seeking a debate on the science, a request that was politely ignored by others.

Overall, the attendees at this year's conference reflect a profound change of attitude in the business community from previous events. The audience was almost exclusively from business, the representatives were more senior, the sense of everyone playing their part was palpable. Even an unscheduled appearance by an Extinction Rebellion protester got a warm round of applause.

It's too early and too premature to reach big conclusions from one 2-day conference but for the first time in the 12 events in this series, there was a dominant sense of united purpose and direction towards the ambition set out in the Paris Agreement. Now we need other countries to get with the programme.

The organisers would like to acknowledge with thanks all the supporters and sponsors, including the Ministry for the Environment, Westpac, IAG and Contact Energy. Presentations from the conference will be available on the conference website [here](#) shortly.

Communiqué on behalf of the conference organiser, the Environmental Defence Society.