

**SPEECH GIVEN BY SENIORS CLIMATE ACTION NETWORK (SCAN)
AT THE AOTEAROA CLIMATE STRIKE RALLY, DUNEDIN, 26 MAY 2023**

Tena koutou katoa,

Every day the news is full of floods, and droughts, and catastrophes, and we wait anxiously for the next one.

At the moment, the future looks bleak, but there are other pathways. There are futures that can result from us doing everything we could possibly have done.

It's vitally important that we explore "what if it's too late". But it's also vital that we explore what if it isn't?

What if it is not too late?

What if the air smelt fresh and clean and was loud with birdsong everywhere?

What if there was a cover of forests and trees that keep us cool. Less concrete and tarmac, no more bare hillsides washing the soil into the rivers and out to sea?

People biking, and walking, and sharing free public transport to get to their nearby co-ops and small businesses owned and operated by the workers. Local money circulating to keep local businesses strong and banks are owned by the community. All local decisions are made by the local community. Schools and universities teach the skills needed to live ecologically sound lives. A greater variety of local food is grown in the most fertile soils in regenerative ways. Wildlife increases, with a lot less meat and dairy eaten. People live in well insulated passive-designed houses built from local materials, wood, clay, and straw. Energy is locally produced from micro-hydro, passive solar and wind, geothermal, clustered around where basic goods are made. Goods are produced locally for what local people need to live a healthy life. By doing so, only a few flights or boat trips are needed in and out of New Zealand.

Emissions are falling and wellbeing indicators are increasing. New Zealand is an example to the world and other countries are moving in the same direction.

Call this vision, hope, or agency, or possibility, but it is what keeps us going. It is about knocking the cynicism that all is in vain, that we are nearing certain extinction and collapse.

We can fight for and make decisions that turn this around, we can nurture our imagination of what it looks like to live a better future, we can start building it already, one step at a time, joining together.

Let every conversation we have about how terrified we are about the future, include what we long for in the future we could still create: "I long for bird song to be heard louder than traffic in the streets", "I long for abundant food forests and tree cover." "I long for local community" etc.

We have a poster at our SCAN stall where we invite you to write up, or draw and stick on what you long for.

Kia kaha