



## A clean smart low carbon economy

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Whether you care about rugby or any sport for that matter, the simple truth is that the polished manner of the Rugby World Cup (RWC) win and our team's conduct on the world stage has filled Kiwis with pride. It has set a wonderful example of what can be achieved through teamwork, a smart game plan and the pursuit of excellence.

And this provides some interesting leadership opportunities for the country and a simple choice. We could bask in the glow of our win until the next RWC in Japan 2019 and continue to pay scant regard for things that truly matter; the climate, the real state of our economy and environment, where our country is heading generally, poverty and the equity gap and the long term future for our kids.

Or we could use the experience as a springboard to the future that we desire. To do that we first need to visualise it.

#### **A Visualisation Engine**

Sports psychologists espouse the virtue of visualisation. It is a tool that elite sportspeople regularly use. I have often wondered why we do not apply the same techniques for the economy given the engine for creative visualisation that we have with our film and digital industry especially Weta Workshop.

If we can create the world of Middle Earth and Pandora on film, surely, we can create a picture of Aotearoa in 2030 or 2050 that we can aspire to. A vision of the future to be proud of.

Unfortunately, we tend to think about the economy in abstract terms and acronyms such as GDP and FDI. At the very least we see it through the lens of familiarity of what has gone before – the game that we have been comfortable playing – rather than what is possible. And we myopically don't see the glaring warning signs. Our economy is again disproportionately dependent on one or more commodities to one market – replace Britain with China, wool and butter with logs and milk powder.

If we can encapsulate the seven advantages that Pure Advantage advocates into a tight script and turn this into an awesome visualisation, then those are the circumstances that could unlock our green growth opportunities.

Whilst there has been a significant amount written on the green economy, it is still hard to see any real cut through with the public. New Zealand needs to deploy different techniques to

build on the opportunities rather than write more reports. We need to bring dynamic creative minds into the process to create engagement with ordinary Kiwis.

### **An Informed Public**

By and large, most of the public are not engaged in the economic discourse and debate and that is primarily because we are not informed and cannot easily assess our options. It is nothing we get excited about. If, however we were fully engaged and had a clear game plan then we would ask for more than business as usual.

New Zealand is attending the Climate Conference in Paris committing to cut carbon emissions by 30 per cent from their 2005 levels by 2030. Compared to the Kyoto 1990 baseline, this is a very modest cut of only 11 per cent.

It is a long way from our ambition to be the world's first carbon neutral country advocated by Prime Minister Helen Clark in 2007 that was widely reported around the world. Our current Climate Change Minister Tim Groser believes that there are "no low hanging fruit" when it comes to reducing New Zealand's domestic greenhouse gas emissions, and the country would need to rely heavily on buying its way out of the problem by purchasing carbon credits from other countries.

As a clean technology specialist, within NZTE's investment team, I spent six years exploring viable options. We researched and developed a clean economy model – a smart low carbon high value economy based on our measured values of; quality of life, quality of environment, social equity and education. The model included a simple outline of what we could do to reduce our carbon emissions [especially agriculture] and proposed different pathways for prosperity and partnership models for specific sectors.

The aim was that our ideas would gain traction if we had an open discussion on the roadblocks to change and were able to garner buy-in from politicians across the political spectrum and see bureaucrats in different ministries and various parts of the economy working together effectively.

### **Teamwork**

For a small country we have produced some remarkable winning team performances throughout the years but none more recent and exemplary for New Zealanders than this year's RWC. There has been abundant interest and discussion about the lessons that can be drawn for business from the All Blacks' success whether we are talking about culture, work ethic, mindset, fitness, and skills on and off the field as well as their sterling teamwork – every athlete knowing their specific role and playing to their strengths.

Some people might suggest that you cannot draw a sports analogy to business and that it is ineffective to apply that thinking to a modern market economy. I believe that we can. I believe we can have different parts of the economy that compete for attention and resources –

tourism, dairy, meat, fisheries, forestry, energy, services, manufacturing, digital, creative, minerals – all working in harmony.

One example of smart team work has been championed by the World Economic Forum and that is industrial symbiosis. In other words, the “sharing of services, utilities and resources among industries and businesses in order to add value, reduce costs and improve the environment”.

Our NZTE team used this model to help bring together a diverse range of stakeholders in Kawerau. We developed a shared vision, and a range of “circular economy” partnership and investment opportunities and a set of guiding principles for everyone to follow. It is still early days, but we are starting to see some promising projects materialise so keep an eye on Kawerau.

Teamwork across politics, business and communities is going to be fundamental to New Zealand’s success and will be the ultimate Advantage for Aotearoa. But first we need an audacious vision and an imaginative plan put into action.

Then and only then would we be able to show the world a clean pair of heels.

Article written for Pure Advantage

Chris Mulcare - Nū Capital Works