

## **Sully Alsop**

It took me about a minute to get up here to speak to you today. And something amazing happened in that one minute. Something truly remarkable that happens every minute of every hour of every day in NZ. Something that you are all a part of. In that one obscure minute NZ exported another 5 and a half tonnes of pastoral agricultural product generating more than \$100,000 for NZ.

The average income in NZ is \$52,000 so in less than a minute the pastoral sector generated the annual household income for one family.

The rural sector that you all work so hard in just paid for a school teacher, a policeman, a nurse, or maybe about a quarter of a politicians' salary. Maybe that minute made it possible for one of those non farming households to take their family on a holiday, or get their children a better education.

And that is the message we all bring to parliament today. This isn't just about rural communities or urban centres this is about all of NZ and protecting the way of life that we all enjoy, the way of life that the pastoral sector contributes to so significantly for all – every minute.

And that pastoral sector, that is so much the fabric of much of our country's identity, is confronted with unprecedented change and challenges.

We are not here to push back against change, we are not laggards and do not have our heads buried in the sand. Quite the opposite, much of the change that is being proposed is not actually change at all, but a continuation of the good work carried out by our sector over the past decades well before water quality and climate change became daily talking points.

We should all be proud of the more than 100,000km of waterway fencing already undertaken. We should be proud that more than a quarter of the nations native bush is on our land that we protect and enhance.

Our rural communities are pro active problem solvers. I am personally very proud of what has been achieved in my neck of the woods – the Wairarapa. A cyclone in the 70's caused huge damage on the delicate hill country. Soon after poplar and willow planting trials were undertaken and since then millions of trees have been planted for erosion control. This was not legislated, it was not compulsory, it was just motivation of farmers and some education from Regional Land Managers.

That's right Shane Jones, if you're still trying to work out how to plant half a billion trees, you don't need to be up all night researching on your laptop in a hotel room, you just need to pop over the hill and ask the farmers and land managers in the Wairarapa.

We are not here to push back against change, we are here to make sure that change is done right. And what you have proposed in the Healthy Waterways legislation is not right. To be blunt, it is a lazy, unimaginative, piece of legislation that at best will be clunky, inefficient, ineffective, and demotivating. New Zealanders, all New Zealanders deserved better. We are not here to push back against intended outcomes of this legislation, but we are here to push back strongly against how you have proposed to achieve those outcomes.

The Healthy Waterways legislation gives a broad brush, one size fits all attempt at dictating terms on a national level. Landowners in this country were never consulted as to the relevance and practicalities of this plan. This is either arrogant or lazy and NZ deserves better.

How can one document cover all the different soil types, topography, and climates in this diverse country. The issues on Canterbury's stony plains will be different to the high country, which will be different to the peaty soils of Waikato, to the beaches of Auckland, to the dry hills of the east coast.

If this government really wanted to show leadership in this area they would have taken the time to clearly define the issues, and work with all stakeholders to come up with a practical solution, that would work on the ground, rather than cave to public perception.

This lack of consultation showed in the 17,500 submissions highlighting the weaknesses of the legislation. Why the pastoral sector were not consulted is beyond me. What you are proposing will have massive impacts on our businesses, our families, our communities, and in turn the rest of NZ, the teachers, the nurses, the policemen that agriculture supports, every minute. It would be nice to think we were at the table and not simply on the menu.

The lack of research was evident by ideas such as grandparenting land use change and audited farm plans being included. These have been proven to be unfair and ineffective tools in regional plans throughout the country. The fact they showed up again in the Healthy Waterways legislation shows the lack of imagination and research. It was lazy and NZers, all NZers deserved better.

So I challenge our leaders, instead of clunky, one size fits all, legislation give us the space and flexibility to come up with our own solutions tailor made to our individual land and water quality issues.

Instead of audits and box tickers that we will pay for either directly or indirectly, pour money into science. Our universities, Massey and Lincoln were so vital to the production gains made over the last 40 years can again be vital in this next stage of NZ pastoral agriculture that is less about production and more about maximising the value of that product. Give us less box tickers and more research and development.

Instead of box tickers give us support and expert advice. We will come up with great solutions that even the universities cannot if you give us support, confidence, and education where we need it.

Instead of audits give us flexibility to come up with our own solutions.

Instead of being stick wavers, be our partners. All NZers, the nurses and policemen and teachers rely on it.

I'm not scared of this change because it is not really change but a continuation of the good work we already do.

I'm not scared of this change because our sector has been challenged before and we rose to that challenge and adapted.

But we cannot do it without pastoral land. We have to stop the sale of productive land into foreign ownership. We cannot meet the challenges ahead and continue to provide all NZers, the teachers, nurses, and policemen with the NZ we currently enjoy without pastoral land.

We have to stop prostituting NZ out as the dumping ground for the worlds carbon addiction.

Our rural communities matter.

Our schools matter.

And not just for our rural communities but for all those non rural households whose incomes our exports support every minute.

These international owners don't care about NZ's future, they don't care about our communities. They are simply here to dump their carbon rubbish and move on leaving our grandchildren to wonder what happened. What happened to the NZ we, their grandparents talked about, what happened to all those nurses, teachers, policemen that are no longer supported.

I know this was never the intention of this legislation. But by signing off on the first 30-year bandaid of an idea that springs to mind is short sighted, lazy, and NZ deserves better. Show true leadership. Look for long term solutions, don't just settle for the best idea in a bad bunch. NZ relies on you doing so.

To you all thank you, and feel proud about what you do in every unremarkable minute of the day and the impact it has on this country.

Thanks