

Has this experience of Coronavirus given us any hope for the future?

In our opinion, yes! – but only if we start making changes now.

We present thoughts around how we might go forward from isolation. We encourage readers to respond amongst yourselves and to us with your own thoughts and actively to engage by word, Facebook, letter etc with local and national government. Kia kaha!

Professors Michael Baker and Nick Wilson argued, in an authoritative and careful article in the Christchurch Press of 7th April, that New Zealand's virus elimination strategy has been right and the nation "must stay in this fight" for the sake of a better society. Relax this strategy and we risk the pandemic taking off again, greatly magnifying existing social inequalities and overwhelming our national health agencies. As it is, the NZ response has mobilised huge reserves of people and innovation at home, at work and in business. They hope such emergent collaborations will characterise our nation after Covid.

The pandemic has focused us on what really matters, – our health, loved ones and communities as well as our livelihoods. And we have much to be thankful for. Despite the grief and hardship many Kiwis are suffering, our country has so far managed to avoid the worst of Covid. Particularly poignant at Easter time, we recognise people who are prepared to give everything, even their lives, in the service of us all. The country's leadership has allowed us, even with all our failings, to serve as an example in the world. As the pollution of transport and the fires of industry have been stilled, people report the skies clearing over cities, birdsong returning and renewed enjoyment of Nature's vitality and simply of time in the

garden. Many have had a unique opportunity to step back from daily 'business as usual', to re-network our social links despite physical distancing, and to consider options for recovery and change as Covid recedes

Covid 19 has given us a glimpse of real world disruption. Yet, it has been a finite shock. The longer-term environmental shocks facing us are likely to be far more destructive. Baker and Wilson suggest the "silver lining" of this global crisis might be providing us with the opportunity for a major reset in how we organise our society and our relationship with our environment. Listing a set of primarily governmental processes to enable this, they suggest we have one to two years before the pandemic settles "to plan what our new world will look like".

In contrast, even as planning must go on, we suggest **now** is the time for us all to act on re-setting. As a species, human beings have survived by dealing with the emergency immediately before us. Our response to Covid 19 has proved that. We deal less well with the long emergency facing life on Earth. There will soon be a massive pull to fall back into 'business as usual'. Yet we have been reminded of what really matters to us. It would be so easy to forget how our lives totally depend on undisturbed natural processes - unpolluted freshwater and air, reliable rainfall, healthy forests and wetlands, viable fisheries, the diversity of all living beings. All are threatened by pollution and climate disruption with our ever-growing demand for energy. Covid has taught us how we can change our ways of doing things and allow the Earth to recover on its own terms. Each of us has been granted another opportunity to choose henceforth to consume less and differently from the time before Covid.

Where can we find the inspiration and staying power to do this? In his booklet on 'Tīwaiwaka' (Fantail), Rob McGowan (Pā Rōpata) provides an enlightening perspective. He describes how Māori, the first of Aotearoa's peoples, came here to escape overcrowding and poverty, found a land of plenty and consumed it, forgetting to use what the land provided with care and respect. Life again became a struggle and they had to learn from the land how to live with it. The mātauranga (knowledge and understanding) they developed is the basis for Tīwaiwaka and its six principles. 1. The Earth, Papatūānuku, is the source of all life. Caring for the land is the first priority. Everything else is measured against this. 2. We are just part of the Universe, not the centre. 3. The mauri is the web of connections that sustains life. Many people have lost connection. The mauri takes priority over the needs of any individual or species. 4. People are not the masters of the mauri. We are embraced by it and must care for it. 5. No individual is more important than any other. 6. We give special care to the tiniest creatures. They are the foundation of life.

It makes sense to us that that the health of the Earth, our planet, must take priority in any decision-making. Hitherto, in Aotearoa as elsewhere, economics and human wants have eclipsed the needs of the biosphere. Although New Zealand has been shielded from the worst, Covid has shown how we are all together in this world. We are all interconnected. Separation between us and other species is an illusion. We all rely on a healthy biosphere.

Ka ora te Whenua, ka ora te tangata. – Healthy planet, healthy people.

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