

# Warnings about warming

**New Zealand needs to get its act together and combat global warming, writes CAMERON BROADHURST.**

The public, businesses and the government need to urgently address the lack of national awareness and action on the global climate crisis, say New Zealand experts.

Key academics, scientists and business commentators spoke recently at an Auckland conference on climate change, urging New Zealanders to wake up before it is too late.

Associate professor Ralph Chapman, of Victoria University, called the level of awareness in New Zealand "dismal" and said talk of pulling out of the Kyoto pact showed a lack of understanding of the seriousness of the issue.

"The key is not what we emit, the key is we are seen to do something and that influences others to take action. Failing to limit the damage would be very, very silly," he says.

"We can't cure the problem because there's so much momentum in the system now, but we can avoid some of the worst aspects of the damage."

He says it is important to create a consistent policy framework and learn from other countries.

While debate has run in the New Zealand media in the last year, Dr David Wratt, from the National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research, says contrary to arguments which sought to dispute this, global warming was not in doubt in the scientific community.

"Over the coming centuries, if there are no efforts to curb emissions we'll be well outside the range of experience," he says.

"New Zealand sea levels have risen about 18cm over the last century. Our glaciers overall have gotten shorter and cover less area."

He claims these environmental changes are a combination of warming and natural changes.

Associate professor Richard Warrick, of the University of Waikato, says while different global climate models give dif-

ferent patterns to predicted changes over the next 100 years, all of them saw an increase in temperature.

Warrick says although changes to New Zealand's environment could mean new crops such as maize could be grown, the potential for the spread of invasive plant species would alarm farmers.

Financial commentator Rod Oram says there has been a sea change in international business thinking in the last 18 months, with companies turning to dealing with carbon emissions and the environmental responsibilities of the climate crisis.

He claims the New Zealand business community is lagging behind the trend.

"We're not making at all good progress on this. Our energy consumption, efficiency and emission patterns are pretty abysmal. The farming community, bar a few enlightened souls, is in denial," he says.

"In contrast to the picture overseas, businesses in New Zealand are refusing to acknowledge climate change, or if they do, they see it as a burden, not an opportunity."

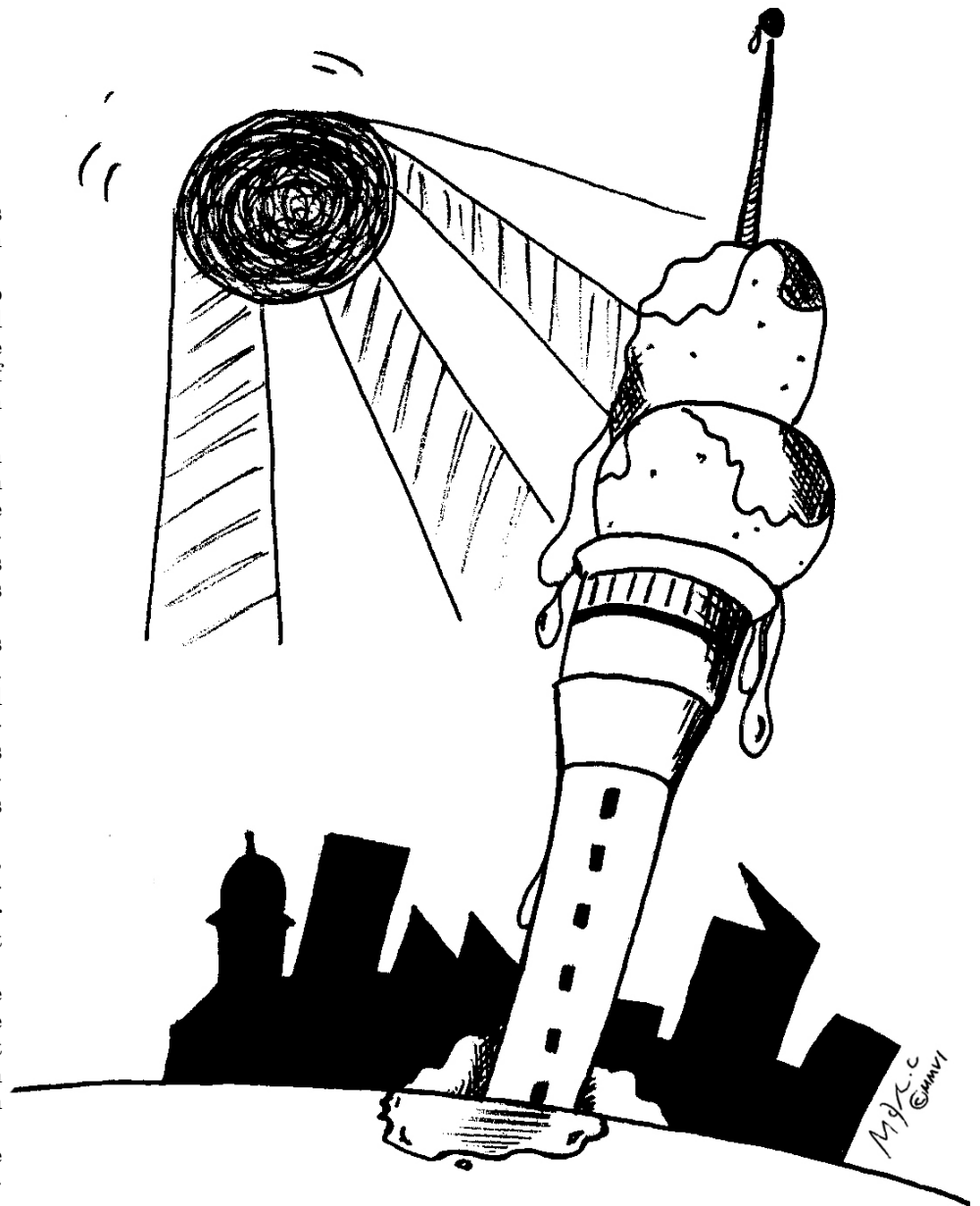
International schemes such as the Carbon Disclosure Project, set to come to New Zealand for the first time next year, have made a major impact on European companies, where carbon trading is mandatory.

Oram says the international value of the trade has risen to almost \$3 billion for the last year, or 374 million tonnes, more than the entire value of the United States wheat and soy bean crop.

He says industry needs to be not only more efficient, but more radical in seeking out new technologies.

He argues that big businesses such as Air New Zealand and Fonterra ought to invest in carbon offset schemes to successfully market themselves globally.

"If we ignore these issues and fail to



change we're going to do very serious damage to our economy and I'm not sure our reputation can stand it.

"We'll be getting off very lightly compared to some countries in terms of physical changes and nobody's going to

let us get off the hook lightly on economic terms."

Oram says New Zealand needs to live up to the image the world already has of it.

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**Ana Salazar, 38, psychologist**

The process is scary. If we don't watch out it could have catastrophic consequences like the melting of the Arctic region. I guess as a whole we should be trying to do something about it.



**John Swaney, 50, management consultant**

It's terrible. We should be doing something about it - pretty much whatever we can.



**Kareen Hillenaar, 20, student**

I don't know much about it so I'm not that worried. We definitely should be doing something about it. Maybe the government needs to inform us about it and act on it.



**Niall Bassett, 25, engineer**

It's quite concerning. I saw the *Inconvenient Truth* and it outlined the problem. I think we should be putting more pressure on the government and changing daily things in our lives like asking for green power and demanding greener options.



**Shona Han, 25, student**

It's really bad. The pollution is a really serious issue. We need a clean, green environment. The environment in New Zealand is really good, it's much better than other countries. But we should give visitors rules when they are here like disposing of their rubbish properly.

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