

TABLED DOCUMENT NO.3

Sue McArthur - to BOPRC Meeting, Tuesday 25 June, Public forum.

Thank you for this opportunity to share my thoughts with Councillors around the report presenting options for Bay of Plenty Regional Council to declare a Climate Emergency and consider the establishment of a Climate Change Fund.

I fully support this proposal, primarily because public statements by all governing bodies that acknowledge the seriousness of the Climate Crisis are an essential first step in signaling to a largely ill-informed community that there is a big problem coming around climate that will have a profound affect on us all.

I have some personal questions for Councillors and staff.

How much have you read about the Climate Crisis?

Is it an issue that causes you worry and grief and fills you with a sense of dread?

Do you fear for your children's and grand children's futures?

Do you feel a sense of shame about your unwitting role in the damage that has been done to our Earth?

This is how I feel about the Climate Crisis and these feelings have come from my research as a person whose education has been science and evidence-based and also as someone who just lives in the world – watching the turn of the seasons and the cycles of life.

The purpose of my questions is not point the finger or judge you if these same thoughts have not occurred to you, but I do strongly urge you, if you have not done your own research around the Climate Crisis to do so, so that in your capacity as community leaders and decision makers you are well informed and able to make good decisions about how we deal with this huge problem.

Three relatively recent events in our local history came to mind as I was writing this.

The first is the Matata Floods of May 18, 2005 – a time when the Climate Crisis was not in our world view. A deluge of the sort that hit Matata - 94.5mm fell in one hour at nearby Awaponga and 347mm in two days at Tauranga was described as unusual but not unheard of in New Zealand. This event damaged 100 homes in the region and cost \$9.5m to repair and mitigation work.

On April 6 2017, following heavy rain from the remnants of Cyclone Debbie, the stopbank protecting Edgecumbe from the Rangitāiki River was breached. The town was rapidly flooded, giving residents barely minutes to escape from their homes. 305 homes were affected by the event and insurance claims were estimated from Cyclone Debbie and Cook combined at \$109m.

When was New Zealand last hit by two massive cyclones one month apart?

I have been unable to find out what the direct costs to Whakatane District Council and BOPRC were of this disaster, but some of you here today will have an idea of this. I worked at the Riverslea Mall in Edgecumbe last Friday and it is

desolate – the Supervalu Supermarket is still closed two years after the floods and Edgecumbe is a town just hanging on.

The third event that occurred just this last summer was the mega-mast where the hot, dry summer caused a huge increase in seed and berry production by NZ forests creating a food bonanza for our native birds, but which also fuels rodent and stoat plagues that will pose a serious threat to native birds and other wildlife as predator populations build up next spring and summer. Mast events occur periodically, but have been occurring more regularly in recent decades. Mega-masts are unusual and are almost certainly related to weather events at the time of plant flowering.

Cyclones, flooding and masts all occur in nature, but it is the intensity of these three events that I want to bring to your attention today. These have happened in the Bay of Plenty in very recent history and have been highly damaging for those affected.

Are our rates collections and insurance cover sufficient to pay for massive weather events and floods that occur at the increasing incidence predicted by climate scientists?

Can we sustain a Matata flood or a Rangataiki River stopbank breach every few years?

How will repeated mega-masts affect our native animal bird life if they occur every few years? Will our eco systems collapse?

A lot of us making personal changes to the way we live and consume immediately will help, but it is system change – reconfiguring our economic and social policies as a country that will be needed to produce change at the scale and pace that is required.

System changes cannot be made by individuals, they are made by local and central government, usually with legislative support.

I'm asking this of the Regional Council today.

Yes, please declare a Climate Emergency.

Yes, please establish a fund to pay for the expertise and actions needed to kickstart change on a system-wide scale.

I'll leave you with this from the IPCC:

Every ACTION matters

Every BIT OF WARMING matters

Every YEAR matters

Every CHOICE matters