



To: Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern, Prime Minister
and all recipients listed on page 3

Friday 19th February 2020

Dear Prime Minister, Cabinet Ministers, Labour MPs, and Mayors and Councillors of QLDC and CCC

Building new jet capable airports in New Zealand despite our climate emergency.

We are writing to each of you both collectively and individually about the decisions around whether or not to build new jet capable airports at Wānaka and/or Tarras. You, both central and local governments to whom this letter is addressed, have ownership and control of both of these jet-airport decisions.

You, the recipients of this letter, have significant holdings in both of these airport company assets.¹

You are the decision-makers (or you should be) and you are all members of New Zealand's government, either at national or local level. Recently, your national and local governments have each declared a climate emergency. You are thus all in agreement as to the critical importance of climate change.²

The science is no longer a matter for serious doubt or debate. All international bodies and climate scientists essentially agree: climate change is an existential crisis facing the whole planet. Recent reports from the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment (including one released yesterday) and the Climate Change Commission have highlighted the precarious situation New Zealand is facing, and they make sobering reading.³ They also make it clear that we need to find solutions and make decisions which are bold and truly sustainable.

All societies, including New Zealand (despite its geographical isolation) face dramatic adverse consequences if the world does not take all steps it can, **now immediately and urgently**, to reduce (or at the very least to not increase) greenhouse gas emissions. New Zealand is among many nations which have agreed to take this approach in our collective self-interest.

The only rational decision in New Zealand's collective self-interest that you as our political leaders can responsibly make is to decide at all times to do whatever you can to ensure that New Zealand reduces, or at the very least, does not increase or facilitate the increase of carbon emissions.

Government cannot expect on the one hand for other industries, such as agriculture, to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and then on the other hand allow the expansion or development of additional jet aviation capability in New Zealand, thereby enabling activity which will inevitably and significantly increase carbon emissions.

Decisions specifically relating to proposed jet airports at Wānaka and/or Tarras

With all of this in mind, we are writing to you specifically about the decisions whether or not to build substantially more jet airport capacity at Tarras and/or Wānaka. As these decisions are in your hands, we have three important questions we ask of each of you:

1. How can any responsible New Zealand government decision-makers decide to build an additional jet airport in Central Otago? New Zealand itself does not need any more jet capable airports in a country with a population of 5 million.
2. If the only justification for more jet capable airports (as is clearly the case advanced by their proponents) is to enable or facilitate more international tourist arrivals by air (which has the direct effect of facilitating more carbon emissions), how is that consistent with New Zealand's commitment and urgent need to do its share to tackle climate change?
3. Even if it were arguable that, post-Covid, our overseas tourist numbers should return to pre-covid levels in New Zealand's best economic interests, self-evidently such tourist numbers are already catered for by New Zealand's existing number of jet capable airports. What is the political and moral case for building more jet airport capacity than we currently have, when this decision will certainly facilitate an increase in tourist flights and therefore in an increase in carbon emissions?

Showing leadership and playing our role in global climate change efforts

New Zealand cannot deal with the climate change crisis alone. It needs to retain its credibility as one of the world's smaller nations, when we ask the world's major economies to reduce emissions in order to save us all.

Our governments cannot on the one hand make decisions to facilitate the increase of carbon emissions in the tourism sector, just because it provides economic benefits to New Zealand, but at the same time insist to other countries who also have important carbon-based economic activities, that nevertheless they must cut back.

There are, of course, many other compelling reasons for the communities of the Queenstown Lakes and Central Otago regions to oppose new jet airports at Tarras and/or at Wānaka.⁴ Overtourism, impossible and unaffordable demands on infrastructure, damage to our natural environment, creating problems for future generations are all important and valid reasons, and there are many others.

However the existential and urgent crisis that is climate change puts the correct decision for New Zealand's elected representatives beyond argument.

If our political leaders cannot make the only logical, let alone moral, decision in the face of the climate change crisis, it calls into question the credibility of our commitments - both nationally and internationally.

We believe that New Zealand - the team of five million - is better than that.

Ngā mihi

The Committee, Wānaka Stakeholders Group Incorporated*



Per Michael Ross, Chair



Per Mark Sinclair, Deputy Chair

* WSG membership as at 11th February 2021 stands at 3,477 people.



This letter has been read and is fully supported by the following community organisations based in the Upper Clutha which between them represent 5,769 people:

- Hawea Community Association (representing 2760 people), per Cheryl Walthew, Chair
- Mount Barker Residents Association (representing 157 people), per Jerry Rowley, Chair
- Alberttown Community Association (representing 2,000 people), per Heather Thorne, Chair
- Luggate Community Association (representing 600 people), per Dave Hawkins, Chair
- Cardrona Valley Residents and Ratepayers Soc. (representing 150 people), per Tim Allan, Chair
- Sustainable Tarras Inc. (representing 102 people), per Marilyn Duxson, Chair

This letter has been sent directly to:

- Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern, Prime Minister
- Hon Grant Robertson, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance, Minister for Infrastructure
- Hon David Parker, Minister for the Environment
- Hon Nanaia Mahuta, Minister for Local Government
- Hon Damien O'Connor, Minister for Rural Communities
- Hon Stuart Nash, Minister for Economic and Regional Development, Minister of Tourism, Minister for Small Business
- Hon Michael Wood, Minister of Transport
- Hon Kiri Allan, Minister of Conservation
- Hon Priyanca Radhakrishnan, Minister for Youth
- Hon James Shaw, Minister of Climate Change
- All other MPs in the Labour Government Caucus
- Jackie Dean, MP for Waitaki electorate
- Mayor Lianne Dalziel and all councillors of Christchurch City Council
- Mayor Jim Boulton and all councillors of Queenstown Lakes District Council

This Letter is also copied to:

- Judith Collins, Leader of the Opposition
- All other MPs
- Simon Upton, Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment
- Dr Rod Carr, Chair of the Climate Change Commission
- QLDC CEO, Mike Theelen
- CODC CEO, Mayor and Councillors
- CCC CEO, Dawn Baxendale
- QAC CEO, Colin Keel
- CIAL CEO, Malcolm Johns
- Auckland International Airport Limited CEO, Adrian Littlewood
- Media
- WSG Members

Footnotes:

1. Christchurch International Airport Limited (CIAL) is owned 75% by Christchurch City Council and 25% by the New Zealand government. Queenstown Airport Corporation (QAC) is owned 75.01% by Queenstown Lakes District Council (QLDC) and QLDC has told the High Court that any decisions relating to Wānaka Airport are within the 100% control of QLDC notwithstanding that Auckland International Airport Ltd owns 24.99% of QAC.
2. NZ Government: <https://www.labour.org.nz/news-climate-emergency>, Christchurch City Council <https://newsline.ccc.govt.nz/news/story/christchurch-city-council-declares-climate-emergency>, QLDC <https://www.odt.co.nz/regions/queenstown/qldc-declares-climate-emergency>
3. Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment: <https://www.pce.parliament.nz/publications/pristine-popular-imperilled-the-environmental-consequences-of-projected-tourism-growth>, and follow up report published this week: <https://www.pce.parliament.nz/publications/not-100-but-four-steps-closer-to-sustainable-tourism>. Climate Change Commission: <https://www.climatecommission.govt.nz/news/our-draft-advice/>
4. See very detailed summaries of key arguments here: <https://protectwānaka.nz/7-key-reasons/>