

A moral issue

Mr Cameron Mudgwich of the Petroleum Exploration and Production Association (PEPANZ) said transition to a lower carbon energy future may take decades or centuries to get right ([Stuff Business, 20/02/2016](#)).

Tell this to the people of Kiribati, Marshall Islands or any of our low lying island neighbours, and they will tell you bluntly, “we don’t have decades, let alone centuries”. At the recent [Pacific Climate Change Conference](#) in Wellington, President Anote Tong of Kiribati told the crowd that he has devoted his three terms of presidency preparing a dignified exit for his people, for when the rising sea swallows the island nation. Then a young islander broke into tears, as she described how villagers have been building sea walls around their islands one by one, only to be washed away by the last king tide.

President Tong spoke strongly, *“it is a moral issue, not an economic question. It’s about human survival.”* But *“governments don’t have conscience, they have elections”*, the president added.

If governments don’t have a conscience, it is no surprise that PEPANZ continues to insist on a world reliance on fossil fuels, while downplaying the benefits and opportunities of renewable energy and other sustainable alternatives. The fact is we have dozens of renewable energy projects ready to go live across NZ. Together, these could power our whole transport system and free us from oil dependence. The only thing we don’t have is political will.

Catherine Cheung, Okato

Published on 25 Feb 2016 in Taranaki Daily News.