

What price Maui Dolphin?

Dr. Nick Smith is clearly pushing his party line (TDN July 31), labeling as 'extreme' Greens proposals to ensure better protection for the last remaining Maui Dolphins through exclusion of fossil fuel exploration and mining within their sanctuary.

Dr. Smith's claim of 'no incidents' in 40 years is based on an absence of evidence (not evidence of absence), and ignores the significant risks to marine mammals from seismic survey and blasting, dumping of wastes, spills, dispersants and ship traffic.

Statements by Dr. Smith and Jonathon Young that the Greens proposal would cost billions of dollars and thousands of jobs and make the fossil fuel sector an 'endangered species' are pure hyperbole, albeit consistent with this government's agenda of scare-mongering in support of their flawed short-term economic policy over longer-term sustainability. This 'business-as-usual' approach is outdated and discredited, ignoring the massive future costs to biodiversity, agriculture, fisheries and essential infrastructure of not transitioning off fossil fuels.

Responsible governance focused on the future should be leading the transition to a green economy, as recommended by the NZ Royal Society, rather than trying to prop up the fossil fuel sector, already in decline, according to the government's own figures. In any case, the Greens proposal is not to shut down the industry, but rather to exclude it, like certain forms of fishing, from the sanctuary inhabited by the critically endangered dolphins, consistent with NZ's international obligation under the UN Convention on Biological Diversity to promote recovery of threatened species.

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