

Balanced debate? (Published in Taranaki Daily News, 9/1/2018)

Reacting to the recent protest against offshore seismic surveys to look for more oil and gas, MP Jonathan Young called for 'balanced' debate (TDN, 1/1/18).

But what about the facts and the scientists?

The endemic Maui's dolphin which calls our waters home is already Critically Endangered, largely due to fishing bycatch. Seismic surveys, drilling and mining would only exacerbate the peril of the dolphin, not protect it or promote its recovery.

Seven scientists from renowned institutions such as NOAA – US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the University of California and Prof. Elisabeth Slooten from the University of Otago jointly published a study recently. They warned, "displacement by seismic activities risks exposing the remaining 55 dolphins to bycatch in nearby fisheries."

Dr. Leigh Torres who discovered the Blue Whale foraging and nursing ground in the South Taranaki Bight stated unequivocally, "Multiple scientific studies have shown that whales change behavior, distribution, and vocalization patterns when seismic airguns are active. Other marine life like squid, spiny lobster, scallops, and plankton also suffer when exposed to airgun noise. The evidence has mounted. There is no longer a scientific debate: seismic airguns are harmful to marine animals and ecosystems."

The harm is so clear that seismic survey has been banned in places of California and Canada.

Critically, seismic survey is the first step of fossil fuel exploration. Stopping seismic survey is key to ending further fossil fuel mining and arresting the grave consequence of climate disruption and social calamity.

In response to <https://www.stuff.co.nz/environment/100277970/taranaki-mp-calls-for-balance-in-offshore-exploration-debate>

Bold steps needed (Published in Taranaki Daily News, 19/1/2018)

In Johnathan Young's response (11/01/2018) to my letter, he appeared to accuse some protestors of being hypocrites. This is a common tactic used by people who refuse to accept the reality of climate change and to do something about it, but support the status quo and do nothing instead.

For sure protestors also use oil in their daily lives, directly in transport or indirectly through consumption of goods and services. We are all part of the problem. There is no denying of that. We have all inherited this fossil fuel-dependent and consumption-driven society whether we like it or not. It is not our choice.

As individuals, we can take all sorts of steps to lesson our carbon footprint – walk and bike more, share an electric car, eat less meat, grow our own food, buy from op shops, even ditch our smart phones and live in a cave! But all these would not be enough to take us to a 'hydrocarbon free' or more socially just world.

What we also need are collective bold steps to challenge the status quo and push for systemic changes that prioritise communities over corporations, long-term sustainability over short-term gain, and regeneration over exploitation. Protesting together against seismic blasting in our ocean for more oil drilling is one such bold step. What steps are you taking to make a better world?