

My name is Annabelle Edwards, and I have lived all but four of my 65 years in Canterbury.

I had a whole lot of detailed stuff written to say at this hearing. Instead, I'm just going to make a few observations which I hope will be taken as positive and thought-provoking.

Firstly, this spring and summer has pointed up some ~~serious~~ serious drawbacks to the way farming and water-use is trending in New Zealand, and in Canterbury in particular.

Even in moderate summers, Canterbury doesn't have the rainfall that can usually be counted on in, for example, Southland and Taranaki, in support of dairying. The water we do have in our braided rivers and underground aquifers, is provided largely by snow-melt from the Southern Alps. We have Spring, Autumn and Winter rain, but Canterbury summers are usually mostly devoid of rain.

Going by the shrinking of the alpine glaciers and by increasingly fickle weather patterns, we would be unwise to count on being lavish with our use of water. Besides that, the water in our rivers and aquifers is already increasingly contaminated, and it fluctuates significantly in quantity through the seasons.

Those of us who live beyond the reach of urban water reticulation, and so depend on pumping our own water, know only too well that the quality of our drinking water is now a matter of concern, and that some domestic wells actually cease to provide water in the latter part of some particularly fierce summers.

Some good work is being done here and there in Canterbury with fencing off waterways on farms, and

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providing vegetation and shade alongside them. However, leaching of contaminants into waterways still occurs. Danfield and West Melton, for example, have had dodgy drinking water off and on for a while now, and areas to the north-west of Christchurch are not immune from water woes.

Christchurch has prided itself on excellent-quality water over the years, but this is under threat and you wouldn't want to tip out of a kayak into the Avon River these days, either.

Various swimming holes around the region are advised against because of ~~water quality~~ concern over water quality, and Ashburton youngsters can be at risk of illness as well as drowning if they jump into a water-race in summer to cool off.

Why is this so? Much of this is due to the spread of dairy farming, which has taken off in Canterbury but requires vast amounts of water and produces alarmingly large quantities of water contamination.

There was a recent advisory against the use of a substance sprayed on dairy pasture to reduce the amount of dairy contamination soaking down into the soils and eventually getting into the water table and/or local streams. The advisory was given because the substance was found to be minutely detectable in the milk product. The halt to the application of this substance should mean an easing back of stocking densities on dairy farms here, at least until something satisfactory can be developed to replace what has been withdrawn.

It's high time more research and effort was put into boosting the fortunes of sheep and beef farming in Canterbury, and in New Zealand as a whole. Otago and Southland switched from sheep and beef to dairying to boost Invercargill. They do have reasonable rain down there, but the region

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(Finnabell Cheevers)

now has terrible water quality. I had country dwelling relatives in Southland who could attest to this.

My grandparents had a dairy farm in Taranaki, handed on to my uncle. They pumped water for the cows and the milking shed, but used roof water for the house. That wouldn't work in Canterbury, and nor would I be keen, now, to drink either sort of water up there.

Dairying and tourism seem to form the economic mainstay of New Zealand these days. That may work in Southland and Taranaki, and other regions that usually have high rainfall, but even our West Coast has taken a hit on its dairying in this summer just gone.

Exports of lamb and beef meat were great for New Zealand for years, and there is still potential for wool — both fine wool for fashion garments and coarser wool for carpets.

Synthetic carpets are rubbish, and yet they seem to be promoted alongside wool carpets as if they were an equally good alternative. Synthetic carpets shouldn't be allowed into this country. We need to promote wool carpet again. It is strictly ahead of the synthetic carpet doesn't do anything for moisture moderation in a home and, if there is a fire, they melt and give off acid, dangerous chemicals. You're not told that in carpet shops, as almost nobody would buy synthetic carpet if they understood that.

Just because the Chinese have gone "gaga" over New Zealand milk, especially as infant formula, this is not a reason to turn New Zealand into a giant dairy farm. We have a great range of climates that should be able to grow an impressive variety of clean, environmentally friendly produce, for ourselves and for overseas markets. The province used to be known not just for lamb meat and for wool, but also for its output of grains and seeds.

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Surely that is worth pursuing again, along with meat and wool production.

New Zealand's other great advantage is the marvellous, beautiful and unique ecology we have here. If we pay careful attention to maintaining and enhancing that we not only get to be even more proud of it, but also people from elsewhere can come and marvel at it, too. Most other places don't have anything at all like it.

It is to our advantage to treasure our native plants and animals, the wild places that still remain, and the wild, open, beautiful rivers we still have. And we need to 'work at bringing back to health' those aspects of New Zealand's heritage that have been abused.

Furthermore, New Zealand's Conservation Estate, is not a place to set up heavy industry, and neither the Canterbury Plains nor the Canterbury Bight are places to indulge in oil or gas mining of any sort. What we have is very special, and we should not risk "stuffing it up" for short-term economic gain.

This summer the water in the Rakata River at Rakata all but disappeared. The Rakata River is home to the wrybill (an endangered native water bird), among various other forms of wildlife, including fish of the usual sort and eels. Fish lay stranded and dead. Some of the fish (including eels) trapped in pools were rescued by wildlife officers, but many aquatic creatures died.

Meanwhile, however, spray irrigation kept pasture productive for dairy herds, where sheep and beef cattle would have done well without anything like that amount of support being lavished on them.

What we should figure out is how to be

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as relatively self-sufficient as possible, in order to do the best we can for the very special place we have here — that is, both in Canterbury and in New Zealand as a whole.

We don't need a heap of brass-tube gadgetry from overseas, or huge, ostentatious houses. Nor do we need heaps more people here, to over-run much of what is left of the natural treasures of this amazing country. It needs "T.L.C." — tender, loving care — and pride invested in it, not unbridled exploitation. We can't save the whole world from damage, but we can look after our corner of it much better than we do now.

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(Annabelle Edwards)