

Introduction

(Dr Malcolm Menzies)

The New Zealand Futures Trust was set up in the early 1980s to promote futures thinking in New Zealand Aotearoa. What is futures thinking? It's a way of thinking about change over the long term so that we can do things now to ensure a sustainable future to pass on to the next generation.

Futures thinking considers probable, possible and preferred futures.

Probable futures can be predicted with a reasonable degree of certainty by looking at trends and where they're taking us. For example, we know we're looking at an aging population in New Zealand, as are most Western countries.

Possible futures are based on projections out further than five years. Obviously there's a lot of uncertainty about what future's actually going to emerge, but the more we can identify alternative futures, the more we'll be able to develop strategies that are robust and resilient, no matter what.

Preferred futures are visions of the kind of future we want. There's a school of thought that says the more that we can imagine the kind of future we want, the more likely it is we're going to be able to achieve it. It's also important that preferred futures are worked out in a participatory way rather than developed on high and handed down to the rest of us.

Futures thinking is important, because there are a lot of key developments, such as in climate change, infrastructure development, energy and transport, or, for example, how we're going to pay for our superannuation in the future are extremely long term.

It's essential that we start off on the right path now. We don't want people in 40, 50 years' time to find out that we were on the wrong track from the beginning.

Futures Online asks people to reflect on the changes they're aware of or experienced over the last four or five decades and then to project forward on the kinds of changes that we might expect. We then ask them to reflect on the kinds of institutions and leadership that we'll require to ensure that we pass on a sustainable future.

It's our hope that educators and their students will use Futures Online as a resource to open up discussions about futures in New Zealand Aotearoa.

We'll be filming some more interviews, so watch this space, and we'd love to have your feedback.

Futures Online's been made possible by a generous bequest from Ian Baumgart, who was New Zealand's first Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment. We're fortunate to have Graeme Baumgart, Ian's son, here to tell us a little bit about what his father might have wanted from Futures Online.

Graeme Baumgart, Teacher, Futures Thinker

[Interviewer question 2.34 to 2.36: What do you remember about your father that showed he cared deeply for the future?]

Graeme: Dad was a great believer in sensible, informed future planning. He endorsed the concept of leaving a small environmental footprint, but think big and think of, of, of the wider vision. His life reflected those values. He encouraged us, as his children, to look for careers where we can make a big impact and make a difference, really, in what we do. He was always talking to us about the future and where it could lead, and his jobs really reflected that all, all through his life.

[Interviewer question 3.16 to 3.22: Do you think he would regard Futures Online continuing with his ideas and goals?]

Well, I think it's a great opportunity - the important, there, being that we're establishing this forum for independent thought, inde-, independent discussion and the opportunity for people to, to have an input into this through modern technology. And to me, and I know that my father would feel the same, that this is an excellent idea and the potential is, is great. He would certainly endorse it wholeheartedly.

[musical interlude 3.52 to END]

Recording ENDS: 4.04