

Sustainable Waikato – 2011 Candidate questionnaire.

Sehai Orgad, Labour Candidate, Hamilton East

How would you encourage economic development while maintaining sustainable use of resources?

I think sustainable economic development is key to the future of this region. I do not believe that environmental sustainability and economic development are mutually exclusive. In fact, promoting research and development of new technologies that allow us to be more sustainable in our farming, for instance, is key to the future of economic development in New Zealand.

How would you ensure the use of evidence-based decision-making in policy development and implementation?

I would be constantly seeking advice from the sector and representing the different perspectives when involved in the policy process. I think we need to ensure that people are informed with the most up-to-date and credible research. Moreover, I think that policy needs to be realistic and can be measured against the evidence presented to ensure it is effective.

How do you intend to foster vision, leadership and co-management in your electorate?

Communication is the key element in making sure that a shared vision can be set, leadership in the community can be supported and co-management of local projects can be established. If elected, my focus will be on promoting discussion in our key sectors, but also facilitating conversations of consequence where community solutions will be used in policy making forums. It's about connecting people and using those connections to initiate innovative ideas and projects to move our communities forward.

What do you consider the main environmental issues for Hamilton and what do you think should be done about them?

A sustainable agricultural sector is a key concern in Hamilton. We are currently at the heart of a region that suffers from degraded waterways and is a big contributor to the greenhouse gas emissions in this country. We need to work on ways to implement more sustainable practices in this sector. Such practices will not only benefit the environment but also the sector itself by having more efficient and less wasteful systems at its disposal. We are also a growing city and we will require more public transport options. We need good investment in our bus system and explore the potential for future commuter rail.

Would you encourage the enhancement of natural ecosystems in Hamilton City and how would you bring this about?

I would like to see the enhancement of natural ecosystems in Hamilton City. I would work alongside local councils to find ways we can promote the growth and maintenance of natural environments that we can integrate with our urban environment. I also think it is important that we work collectively to maintain and grow our natural ecosystems beyond the city that Hamilton residents can also enjoy.

What do you consider are the essential features of a sustainable environment and how would you encourage these to come about?

I think for us to maintain a sustainable environment it is essential that we can balance the needs of our population along with ways we can maintain our natural resources. I think we need to have strong direction from central government for environmental protection, and for that to be at the heart of any policy regarding the use of our natural resources. Moreover, I believe we need local involvement in taking responsibility for maintaining our environment. We also need to encourage our agricultural industry to adopt more sustainable practices. We need to take advantage of opportunities to develop better systems and technologies for our primary industry so we not only put our environmental protection at the heart of how we do business, but that we can expand and diversify this primary industry and grow opportunities in New Zealand.

What are the principal social issues in Hamilton City and how do you think they should be addressed?

The most important issue is child poverty. Currently one in five of our children live in poverty. Locally, in high deprivation areas such as Fairfield/Enderley, we seeing an increase in the need for food parcels and social services. There is no silver bullet - these problems stem from a number of factors - high unemployment, low economic growth, and fewer social services available from the state, resulting in more pressure on charities and non-governmental services to pick up the slack. As well as having strong policy which has children's well being at its heart, we need strong local leadership to be in touch with our diverse communities and initiate solutions from the grass roots.