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the leadership forum

# Dr John Hood

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*Presentation to Knowledge Wave 2003 - the Leadership Forum  
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Final speech notes for John Hood – Knowledge Wave Leadership Forum, 21 February 2003

Tena koutou katoa ano.

Tena koutou ki nga whanau o te Tae Matauranga.

Tena koutou katoa.

Most of us get very few opportunities to lift our sights above the everyday and to engage broadly about our dreams for and contribution to this country's future.

The Leadership Forum was designed as an opportunity for people who are making a difference, right across the spectrum of society, to do just that.

We set out a clear framework for considering those issues under three broad, inter-linked areas: growth, knowledge, and community.

None can be considered in isolation. All are intimately linked.

You will judge the success of this Forum. If it has succeeded, it is because it was NOT just a growth conference, NOT just about education and knowledge, Not a conference that is just about community.

This vision of an inter-related, national and inclusive debate was what the Knowledge Wave Trust and its broad church executive and advisory boards set out to establish.

Indeed, we have celebrated a wide cross-sectoral representation, valuing openness, respect for the views and arguments of others, and strongly motivated to create the environment where we might be challenged by the power of ideas as our society develops.

Our Advisory Board, who were actively involved in structuring this Forum, includes a Cabinet Minister and senior parliamentary colleagues from both major political parties, leading civil servants, leaders from our communities, unions, and business, along with academics and others. We have greatly valued their guidance and counsel.

They were instrumental in creating a dynamic framework which can be seen in the myriad of intentional, accidental, and sometimes inspiring connections that have been made throughout this conference. These have been **all about** the necessity of three elements – growth, knowledge and community – being considered together.

Leadership has been the core theme of this Forum.

Leadership does not simply come from training courses, textbooks, or media training. Nor does it come from toeing the line, accepting the status quo, or giving up when the going gets tough.

It comes from great ideas. It comes from courage. As Nicky Caro said last night, it is both a privilege and a responsibility. And for leadership to flourish, there must be capacity for those ideas to flourish and be debated.

New Zealand has bred many inspiring community, political, educational, sporting, cultural and business leaders.

It has also bred some bad ones. We can all recognise leaders of both kinds in all those fields and more.

The best leaders are inspirational, informed, curious, open-minded, respectful and action-oriented. They can and do make a great difference.

That is a challenge that we all share, as leaders, from the Prime Minister to the youngest Emerging Leader at this Forum.

To see how these connections have worked, think back to the moments that have inspired us – moments like the discussion of creativity in the middle of the growth section; or Justice Kirby’s identification of the three great forces in his life: technology, internationalism, and fundamental human rights, or Juan-Cabot Enriquez’s map and alphabet for the 21<sup>st</sup> century; or Jamie Belich’s provocative diagnosis of the “Kiwi curse”.

Speakers such as Kevin Roberts, Richard Florida, and Peter Biggs have lifted our eyes to the exciting possibilities of a society in which creativity and tolerance drive our success.

Others, such as Paul Romer and Alan Bollard, have challenged us to recognise the scale of effort required if we are to achieve the wealthy, civically robust society that we all aspire to. It is quite clear that we can and must do better, and that we need the courage to keep looking for new ways to address our long term economic challenges.

As Bill Emmott said: “We need to keep moving in order to stand still!”

And the Prime Minister has reminded us that if we only make decisions with our heads, leaders will lose their followers, and that if we only follow our hearts, we will break the bank.

We have been challenged by Anne Salmond and John Hattie, among others, to think creatively with the deep-seated social problems that exist in some of our poorest communities.

And speakers such as John Tamihere and Peter Saunders have proposed new mechanisms for empowering those communities. Simon Upton has clearly defined the constitutional questions that will continue to challenge us, and can be summarised in his proposal for a “a national story” that would bind, inspire and challenge us as New Zealanders.

The linking of these three themes with the responsibilities of leadership has also challenged us to bust apart the false dichotomy that plagues much of our political debate. That is: the notion that we either pursue growth or we pursue social cohesion – that the two are somehow exclusive of one another.

That cannot be. As Bob Putnam showed us, just having strong economic growth is not enough to ensure human happiness.

However, failure to produce a strong, dynamic economy is clearly a predictor for inadequate social and community outcomes.

At the end of a conference like this, there is typically a welter of new ideas and inspiration for action.

That, too, is a leadership challenge. If leadership means anything, it means taking responsibility for turning ideas into action, enthusiasm into productive energy.

This Forum has no mandate to recommend or require outcomes. Rather, may I urge you each of you to take up the challenges and opportunities that have revealed themselves to you in the course of the Forum, whatever they may be, and to act upon them.

For my part, I am delighted to be able to announce today the University of Auckland, of which I am Vice Chancellor, is to establish a new Leadership Institute.

This is our response to the clear value in recognising and nurturing our existing and emerging leaders – something that we cannot do enough, in my view.

The Institute will be formed over the next few months, and is already finding generous support from participants at the Forum.

The Emerging Leaders have been a defining element of this Forum. I, for one, have been moved and inspired by my contacts with this impressive group of people who have leavened our proceedings with commonsense and new perspectives.

We want this new network of Emerging Leaders to flourish, and we have established the means for them to do so. There will be further initiatives to connect the much larger group of Emerging Leaders identified during planning for the Forum.

Mounting a gathering of this size is an enormous task in itself.

There are too many people to thank individually. However, I must mention two.

Firstly, Bridget Wickham, as chief executive of the Knowledge Wave Trust, has been instrumental to its success. We are losing Bridget to the United States in the next few weeks. Thank you for staying to see this venture through to fruition.

And secondly, thank you to Brendan Mosely, who has led the Knowledge Wave team through what has, at times, been a grinding process.

To all of you, pictured up here behind me, thank you.

Finally, let me thank you all for your participation. We hope that you have been challenged and inspired. It has been our privilege to host you.

Let me leave with you a couple of final quotes, the first from Gandhi, the second a Maori proverb that speaks to our challenge:

“If you can dream it, you can do it; and if you can dream it or even conceive of it ... it can be done in five years.”

Ki te kore te putake e makukungia, e kore e tupu.

If the roots of the tree are not watered, the tree will never grow.

No reira.

Tena koutou.

RIMA – TORU!