

from paddock to paddock. I was gutted to see this big gentle fellow go.

Maggie and Tilly are coming up five now and mostly live in the paddock around my house. I used to run them with whatever herd was overwintering on the farm but they have gotten a bit big and navigating sodden winter pasture is a bit hard on them so I keep them confined and try to make their lives as effortless as possible - though one senses they'd prefer to be with a mob, neck deep in social bustle and hierarchical politics.

Tilly is always up for a bit of play-fighting but I have to be bloody careful as she is about the size of a blue whale and strong with it. Once or twice she has caught me off guard with a hefty play bunt that has sent me flying and left me with copious bruising. She thinks this is a great lark and grins accordingly - yes, cows do smile, and

I fell into this job by accident when I took a sabbatical from my usual work and it's not something I would have chosen for myself. It can be demanding and the outcomes are difficult to reconcile with my more empathetic and compassionate tendencies, but overall being around bovines has been a fulfilling experience that has taught me some profound lessons about life and living, ones that have made me a better person... Oh and it got me in a movie, a strange and otherworldly sort of experience but one I wouldn't have missed for anything.

Otherwise as I'm driving about the Waikato past those ubiquitous mobs of cattle, I gaze upon them fondly with the understanding that there's a lot more going on than meets the eye.

Andrew Johnstone is a Waikato farmer.

Marketly Acquired Labels - The Pa??

health of the two nonagenarians. It is a decade where very few enjoy full health and most have either lesser or greater incurable afflictions. Centuries of senior citizens have attempted or committed suicide for reasons of unbearable suffering from these. If this played a part in the suicide attempts of these two people, it only serves to highlight the cruelty of withholding the possibility of a peaceful death.

Eligibility for assisted dying is extremely restrictive. By relaxing the criteria somewhat, brutal and lonely suicide could be replaced by gentle medical help to die. The End-of-Life Choice Society NZ has been told of assisted deaths that are blessedly peaceful. The last words an assisted dying doctor hears are "Thank you".

Ann David - President, End-of-Life Choice Society NZ

Race relations

I read with interest the opinion piece by Michelle Duff (Times July 4th).

I have one question for her that no-one else has been able to answer for me and I am hoping she can. She referred to Don Brash saying in Orewa, that both major races in New Zealand should be treated equally, and then claimed that the comment was racist - could she explain why?

Fred Barrett, Tirau

Questions for the VC

Congratulations on the completion of Te Pa. As you say of your achievement in the Waikato Times "every now and then you can do something that is distinctive and that won't be like anything anywhere else in the country." What the report, and Mike Mather's follow up, do not do, however, is to answer significant questions arising from the construction. I am sure that you understand my reference to Shelley's Ozymandias: "Two vast and trunkless legs of stone, Stand in the desert..." Please note that this is an open letter as the public in general lack the information I am asking you to

provide. Why, when the Maori dictionary Te Aka defines paa as fortified village, fort, stockade, screen, blockade, city (especially a fortified one) did you call your building by that name. Is the University of Waikato under constant fear of attack? Who will be considered acceptable? Who will be refused entry? What has it to do with education, especially university education? Why, when for the last few years you have been firmly reducing numbers of academic staff in selected disciplines, did you choose to spend \$90,000,000 on a building defined as nice to have, rather than essential? Why, and how, did you find it acceptable to borrow 60% of the total cost, knowing that dealing with the burden of interest rates on \$54,000,000 will be with the university for the foreseeable future, and left for future VCs to deal with. Did you consider that \$90,000,000 would have given your staff increases at senior lecturer level, on average, of 180 five year terms. Five years with 180 extra staff would solve all your university related problems, putative and actual. Where is your evidence that Te Pa / The Pa is going to benefit students and staff directly involved in tertiary education? You comment that The Pa / Te Pa will be "a heart for the campus" says nothing specific about how that heart will beat. Another comment "... each individual faculty or school thought of itself as being in "a building"... is not only untrue. It also ignores the fundamental fact that disciplines do, by their very nature, usefully and actually, need to be separate.

S. R. Edwards (Honorary Fellow of the University of Waikato.)

The VC replies

A sustainable approach to managing the University requires that we maintain the value of our fixed assets as they depreciate over time, sometimes by refurbishing existing assets and sometimes with new buildings and systems. With The Pa we have chosen to invest in a new building that not only meets the contemporary needs of the University but also reflects

circumstances. MBIE, which is where Immigration New Zealand (INZ) resides, agreed, but didn't pass that information on to compliance officers, creating a "mismatch in expectations."

The fact that a review had to tell the Government to amend the law - in effect to do the minister's job - coupled with Wood expressing being "a little surprised" that the Dawn Raids continued 19-months after the apology, is further proof that when it comes to the sixth Labour Government, "saying" counts more than "doing."

Because in making an emotional apology, using a modified form of the Samoan act of ifoga or forgiveness, the words don't matter if it's not followed with action, rendering the 2021 ceremony as tokenism.

For Michael Wood, now simply the MP for Mount Roskill (having lost his portfolio

our pride and our aspirations for its future. Running down the assets of the University to pay higher salaries to the staff of today would be an abrogation of our responsibility to leave a quality campus for future generations of staff and students. Today, on its first full day of opening, The Pa was packed with students and a focal point for a level of campus activity that we have not seen in years. It is a pity that Mr Edwards was at his computer offering his opinions instead of being on campus to observe the answers to his questions for himself.

Neil Quigley, Vice-Chancellor

Fight with what's right

New Zealand politics are based in a sea of clichés such as "punching above our weight" and it is quite clear that Chris Hipkins is doing just that when he proposes to challenge the USA and Ukraine over the use of cluster bombs. First, there are long established ways of clearing up mines using the flail tanks that were used in WWII in North Africa and on D-Day. It is a matter of choosing weapons suitable for the battle being fought. This can be addressed in two stages: the battle against a fascist Russian regime, followed by the clean-up. I am sure that Ukrainians would welcome the chance for such a clean up. The Russians kill indiscriminately as they pursue their illegal war. Their propaganda is symptomatic of their sickness. If it takes cluster bombs to knock them back, so be it. The Russians have a history of brutality. On Stalin's watch, they indiscriminately executed their own troops if they retreated to fight another day. Maybe it would not have got to this stage if the Western nations had shown the spine to institute the "no-fly" zone that Zelenskiy asked for a long time ago. "No-fly" zones are not without risk, but not as much risk as the results of dithering.

Hugh Webb, Hamilton

State of our roads

*WP Waikato Times 12th Nov 2024 p 21
The VC's reply is a
total failure*

New uni building 1 ^W ^{22/7/23} ^{WT}

Thank you for giving vice chancellor of The University of Waikato the opportunity to respond to my request for information, and for being able to publish that response along with my original letter.

I posed the questions for two reasons. Unlike a corporate body which sees commercially sensitive reasons for not revealing how and why it arrives at financial decisions, a university is not driven by profit and loss, but by annual, and bi, tri, quad and quinquennial grants from the public purse, together with additional income from fees, bequests, and trusts. It is absolutely not market dependent. It is unarguable that a university's primary purpose is the carrying out of research and the education of students to carry out and apply the results of research. It is not to provide monuments to pride and aspiration. As providers of the bulk of the funding you distribute, the citizens of Hamilton and its wider university catchment area have the right to know, in as much detail as they need, the policies and arguments which underlie your decisions to spend. You, sir, have a fundamental responsibility to provide answers to my original questions. Why, when for

the last few years you have been firmly reducing numbers of academic staff in selected disciplines, did you choose to spend \$90,000,000 on a building with no apparent links with teaching or research plant other than happy social interaction when that \$90,000,000 would have provided you with and additional 150 senior staff across half a decade. How do you justify the ongoing loss of experienced academic staff across the range because you have a personal belief, in your words, that "A sustainable approach to managing the University requires that we maintain the value of our fixed assets as they depreciate over time..." - rather than spend the money on education and research. Some of the world's best education has come out of ancient and draughty prefabs - of the kind our innovative and successful Law School had its being for so many years. Seriously, do you justify the \$90,000,000 expenditure for the university equivalent of the Hillcrest High School Morrison Memorial Theatre in the face of your ongoing reductions of academic staff, reduced curriculum development in the disciplines, and underfunding of fundamental research?

Sam Edwards, Hamilton

New uni building 2

I may not be the only one disappointed by the VC's reply to your correspondent (Times, July 15). While we all congratulate the University on the completion of the Pa, your correspondent, S.E. Edwards, raised important questions seeking clarification from the VC about the expenditure of \$90,000,000 on a new building at the University.

Apparently, \$54,000,000 of the cost will be borrowed money.

The VC did not answer the questions raised, but rather gave a piece of PR accompanied by some rather negative personal comments on your correspondent.

The issues raised were not addressed. Surely the public has a right to know how the expenditure on a palatial building, including new executive offices, is better than investment in staff. As the VC notes, buildings depreciate. Investment in staff, on the contrary, adds future value. We know that student numbers and income are declining. Instead of leaving future VCs with an enormous commitment to debt and interest repayments, there might have been an investment in the staff and potential generation of future students and revenue.

Too often the staff are regarded as a cost rather than an investment in the future of the University.

The VC needs to explain how the expenditure on the Pa will not lead to future displacements or non-replacements of academic staff.

Surely the reputation and sustainability of a university has more to do with the quality of staff, and their teaching and research, rather than buildings? We deserve reasonable answers to serious questions.

Stewart Lawrence, Hamilton