

Head: Potatoes and Oat Milk Gifted to Fonterra

Snap/ Tweet: Local climate action group holds Earth Day event

By Julian Warmington

Potatoes were planted in the foyer of Fonterra's Wellington office on Earth Day to show dairy farmers there's another way to make money.

Local climate action group Fridays for Future held an event celebrating Earth Day directly outside New Zealand dairy corporation Fonterra's Wellington offices last Friday.

The event included songs and speeches with comments aimed at Fonterra and national power generator and retailer, Meridian energy, which also has an office in the building behind Midland Park, on Lambton Quay.

The event was initiated and opened with a speech by Francesca Pouwer, a Dutch-born Kiwi and long-time member of the Wellington branch of the international network.

Pouwer referred to, and quoted from books and words by David Attenborough in both celebrating nature and highlighting the impacts of industrial excess, including the dairy industry.

Earlier this year Fonterra was outed as New Zealand's worst climate polluter for the second year running.

Hutt Valley's own pre-eminent climate scientist Dr. Martin Manning then gave a speech.

Manning led the fourth Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report which shared the Nobel Prize for Peace with Al Gore the year Gore's documentary An Inconvenient Truth was released.

He severely criticised the lack of meaningful and genuine climate leadership from the New Zealand government.

This was followed by a talk by Patrick Geddes, a leading member of Wellington's branch of 350.org, the international climate action group started in the USA.

Geddes talked about the problem New Zealand has with the structure of the five largest gentailers, or power producers and retailers, which results in their burning of coal while artificially inflating prices.

This produces the situation creating the worst of all options for everyone except share holders. Prices remain high, as do industrial greenhouse gas pollution levels.

Local climate activist and member of multiple climate action groups, Caz Sheldon spoke of her belief in the goodness of humanity and the need to strive to maintain that in the face of great adversity.

She described her fear that the climate crisis could end up challenging us to become more self centred and cold hearted as a country and as individuals, as the struggle for resources becomes more pronounced and desperate.

Speeches were interspersed with songs by a singer who played and sang in English, including songs about loving Earth, and demanding climate action.

The event was hosted by Kit Withers, a retired academic, Stanford statistics graduate, and stalwart Wellington climate activist with FFF.

Kit led the concluding action of presenting Fonterra with pots of home grown potato plants which the group left in the foyer of the office building.

This was a symbolic offering of a possible alternative way forward for the company known for its apparently uncaring attitude to its ecologically destructive dairy industry practices.

Pouwer pointed out that perhaps the most brazen and bizarre practice in which Fonterra still engages is the burning of coal to dehydrate milk to send overseas to put into Chinese snack food.

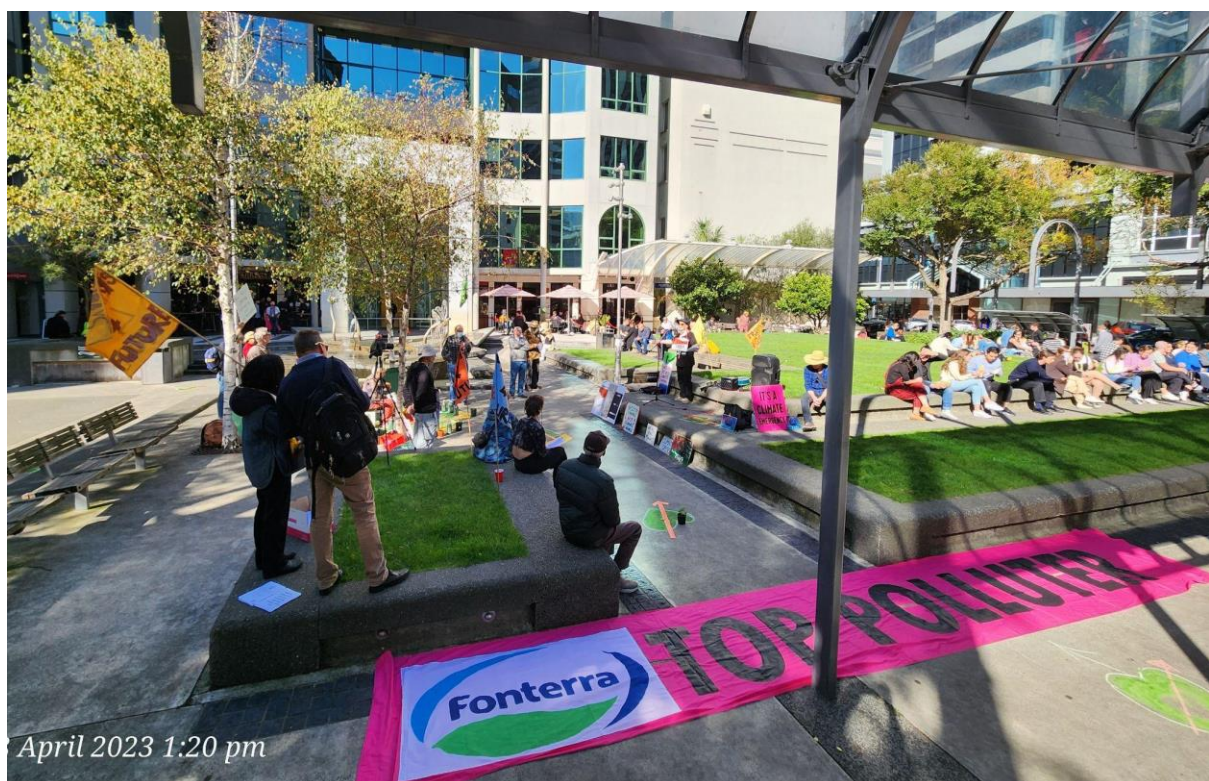
The event had been delayed by a week due to inclement weather. World Earth Day usually falls on April 22nd of each year.

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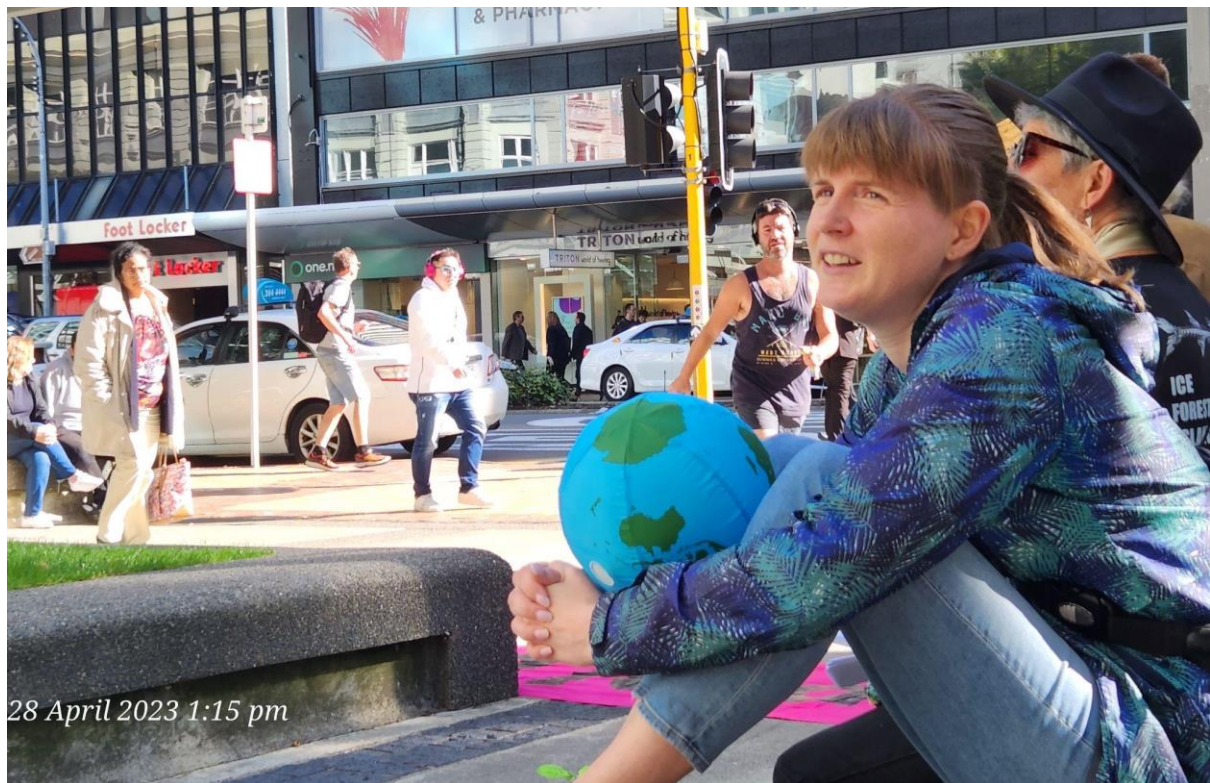
CAPTION: Fridays for Future hold Earth Day event outside Fonterra and Meridian offices, in Midland Park.

Image by Julian Warmington



CAPTION: Speeches, songs, and oat milk were enjoyed by participants including random passersby from Lambton Quay's lunch hour pedestrian rush. The event celebrated World Earth Day.

Image by Julian Warmington



CAPTION: Francesa Pouwer, of Fridays for Future Te Upoko o te Ika, initiated and kicked off the event with her speech on the global theme for the year: Invest in our Planet. She suggested Fonterra redirect their investments from coal and dairy milk into oat milk instead. Image by Julian Warmington



CAPTION: Dr. Martin Manning tell the crowd how the New Zealand government is failing current and future generations.

Image by Julian Warmington



CAPTION: Fridays for Future supporters with their favourite signs, outside Fonterra offices every second Friday, and to celebrate Earth Day 2023.

Image by Julian Warmington



CAPTION: Patrick Geddes of 350.org Pōneke gestures while explaining the problematic structure of Aotearoa New Zealand's electricity generators and suppliers' reliance upon coal.

Image by Julian Warmington



CAPTION: Kit Withers, retired statistician and potato growing enthusiast, introduces the Earth Day event in Midland Park, off Lambton Quay, in downtown Wellington city.

Image by Julian Warmington



CAPTION: Some of the signs surrounding the stage area for the event.

Image by Julian Warmington



EarthDay.org

View FFF Earth Day event **videos *here***.

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLU_m_ycnOJOss85PnBIZeXLQoihRcjEjc