

The Lowdown

Election 2020 special feature

Digital only supplement to the Mahuru/September 2020 edition

It's decision time again in just a few weeks.

The nation goes to the polls on October 17, unless we get another side-swipe by the pandemic.

In this election feature, we have asked the candidates for our electorate (remember, we are now Taieri, not South Dunedin) from the four major parties, for their responses to a short set of questions. They are on the next two pages.

Without a doubt, the last three years have been amongst the most eventful periods in our recent history. We have endured the Christchurch mosque attacks, the Whakaari White Island eruption, and now the pandemic.

Despite having a coalition government that has required compromise, communication, negotiation and cooperation, society itself remains very divided, with a flourishing culture of hate and racism, where too many people just seem to want to shout at each other online or in person.

The huge wealth gap continues to grow, housing is still unaffordable for many and our mental health and suicide statistics are shameful.

So how does the electoral landscape look, and how well equipped are our four major parties to steer us through the next few years?

Let's start with **the National Party**.



National Party leader Judith Collins. Source, <https://judithcollins.national.org.nz/>

They haven't liked being in opposition, and many of them are still going "We wuz robbed!" They like to present themselves as the stable party, the natural choice to govern New Zealand, and better economic managers than Labour.

However, the last three years have been anything other than

stable for National. Four different leaders in two and a half years, the Jami-Lee Ross implosion of 2018 and the recent Michelle Boag-induced train wreck portray a completely different picture.

There is also the lingering memory of their last nine years in power when they oversaw a growing crisis in housing and mental health, and with a complete reliance on unsustainable industries such as rampant tourism and intensification of dairying to support the economy.

While the new party leadership will probably have the required stabilising effect, the fact remains that a large part of the electorate has been unimpressed by the blood-letting, and won't trust them with their vote.

Then there is **Labour**.



Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern. Source, <https://www.labour.org.nz/>

Labour has a leader in Jacinda Ardern who has shown tremendous empathy and an emotional intelligence that allows her to be able to strike the right tone, and find the right words during some very challenging times. She is, without a doubt, their greatest asset.

However, the litany of self-mutilations by Labour ministers has

created the impression, perhaps unfairly, that there is a deficit of talent in Labour's ranks.

The Labour-led government has shown an ability to be decisive, and take action when required in response to circumstances.

But for many folk who have endured escalating housing and living costs on near static incomes, while watching inequality rise, an appetite has grown for systemic, transformative change. The government has had three years to come up with at least some sort of plan that would embed some radical changes and address some of the drivers of inequality and poverty. This, we have not seen.

The challenge for Labour, if it is to lead the next government (and on current polling that looks likely) is to be true to their roots and pass some truly transformative legislation. (Continued on page 4)

Ingrid Leary Labour Party

1. What issues do you think are important for South Dn residents?

More protection for seniors via the creation of a Seniors Commissioner; overhaul the Retirement Villages laws; get Hillside and rail going properly again; ensure good access to the new Dunedin Hospital facilities for all local communities.



2. What issues do you think are important for South Dn businesses?

Re-energise the shopping area with local and central Govt investment, listening to locals and enhancing the

special character here; speed up the new community hub and library build.

3. What achievements by your party over the last three years are you most proud of?

1. Going hard and early on Covid to minimise loss of life and loss of jobs
2. Announcing and starting to build a new state-of-the-art hospital for Dunedin
3. Closing the inequality gap through numerous measures including the Winter Energy Payment, increased benefits, and healthy lunches in schools

4. What contribution can you or your party make in future?

I will be a strong voice in Wellington for the South, and most particularly for our seniors who are disadvantaged by many of our current structures. I will work collaboratively with other southern Labour MPs to ensure this region gets more Government attention and resources.

5. Why should we vote for you or your party?

I have maturity, life experience and a passion for social justice borne from my family's history with the union movement. A Labour-led Government is a safe pair of hands to lead us through the Covid recovery and rebuild.

Scott Willis Green Party

1. What issues do you think are important for South Dn residents?

We need climate safe housing that is warm, cosy and affordable, Guaranteed Minimum Incomes, so that everyone has enough, support for community-led development and we need to harness the passion, skills and knowledge of our South Dunedin community to ensure a sustainable future.

2. What issues do you think are important for South Dn businesses?

Railways are central to the Green Party's vision. We need South Dunedin to return as a hub for engineering and design of railway technology. My passion is to make sure that this happens and that the proud history of South Dunedin will be an asset to a sustainable transport future. That business revival will be central to the maintenance of a strong South Dunedin community.

3. What achievements by your party over the last three years are you most proud of?

The Green Party has achieved important outcomes in Government like raising core benefits so everyone can live better. We've passed the Zero Carbon Bill, banned all new offshore oil and gas

drilling, reprioritised transport planning towards public transport, phased out single use plastic bags, and developed a new biodiversity strategy.

4. What contribution can you or your party make in future?

Government must do more and faster, to protect our planet and people. We aim to support everyone with comprehensive welfare reform and investment in green jobs; take effective climate action through investing in renewables, housing, green transport and regenerative agriculture; support nature



through cleaning up our waterways and protecting our unique wildlife. We have the plans and a track record of delivery.

5. Why should we vote for you or your party?

Party Vote Green because we are the only party with the courage

and knowhow to act on climate, on inequality and for nature. Having a vision and being willing to draw in people and drive it forward is critical to achieving results. The Green Party walks the talk on climate action, equality and care for nature. We need a strong Green team in parliament and we need to get to work for climate justice.

Liam Kernaghan National Party

1. What issues do you think are important for South Dn residents?

Our COVID recovery - both economic and health and wider social concerns. Ensuring our borders are tight and protected to keep COVID out. Good quality, warm dry housing and more social and emergency housing spaces. Ensuring we get our fair share of the benefits of recovery, including support for Hillside, small businesses and industry.

2. What issues do you think are important for South Dn businesses?

Reducing red tape and regulation for businesses to reduce cost and compliance, support from central government to hire new staff and incentivise purchasing of assets, ensure central and local government listens to business concerns, upskilling and training, ensuring we have a workforce agile and able to meet the demands of a developing economy.

3. What achievements by your party over the last three years are you most proud of ?

We were proud to hold the Government to account and improve their performance on the border, on contact tracing, on PPE, on testing and ensuring kids can have good safe environments to learn

from at home during COVID. We stopped the Government's mean-spirited Capital Gains Tax, we promised to invest heavily into cancer care, fund lower decile schools properly, raise more children out of poverty, support small businesses and ensure that the next National Government puts families and communities first.

4. What contribution can you or your party make in future?

The only party with a comprehensive plan to rebuild our economy, ensure our borders are kept tight, to grow health and education, to keep our communities safe and protect our environment. Labour have refused to release policy.

5. Why should we vote for you or your party?



I'm Dunedin born-and-bred. Dunedin is my home and I am passionate about our future. I have already fought for local issues and concerns at

central government level and if I am elected, from day one I can hit the ground running making sure Dunedin gets the benefits of recovery it deserves. I will fight for our corner and be that strong, local champion we need.

Mark Patterson New Zealand First

1. What issues do you think are important for South Dn residents?

Jobs, wages, affordable housing, coastal erosion and long term flood protection.

2. What issues do you think are important for South Dn businesses?

Managing the Covid economy, access to skilled staff and minimising compliance.



3. How has your party contributed to government in the last 3 years?

New Zealand First have played a balancing role within the Coalition. Key initiatives have been the launching the Provincial Growth Fund which has invested heavily in South Dunedin.

Significantly clamping down on unproductive foreign investment, securing 1800 extra Police for which 88 extra are in the Southern District. Pushed for raise in the minimum wage while also defending the access for small business to 90 day trials.

Advocated for and delivered 650 Child Learning Coordinators for Primary Schools, lifting the threshold for free healthcare to under those 14 year olds, upgraded the SuperGold Card for our Seniors, rebuilt our Military and increased funding for St John's among many other initiatives.

4. What contribution can you or your party make in future?

We wish to carry on building on these initiatives. Further policy announcements pending.

5. Why should we vote for you or your party?

We believe we have added pragmatism to the current government, stopping it lurching too far to the "Woke" left while assisting to the current government direction of building a fairer more inclusive society always with an emphasis on putting the interests of New Zealanders first.

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Otherwise, they run the risk of appearing to talk a good game, without making any meaningful difference to the lives of those who need it most.

The Green Party



Green Party co-leaders Marama Davidson and James Shaw.
Source, https://www.greens.org.nz/our_people

There is a danger in coalition governments of the smaller party becoming consumed by the larger. This is what happened to the Māori party in National's last term. So far, the Greens have managed to survive, although it's going to be close. Polling just over the crucial 5% threshold, there is no room for complacency.

The Greens have been critical to the stability of the coalition government. It hasn't been plain sailing, and they have had to make some serious compromises along the way. There has been frequent tension between the Greens and the other coalition minor partner, New Zealand First.

Unfortunately, James Shaw's spectacular own goal over the funding of the private green school has become a major distraction at the worst possible time. It has taken the spotlight away from the many progressive and relevant policies of the party, which, given the environmental crisis engulfing the planet, is far from ideal.

The Greens have kept a focus on improving things for the most disadvantaged in society with some innovative policies, which have also flown under the radar, partly because of the dynamics of the coalition, but also because they have struggled to

get airtime in the covid environment.

It would be a disappointment to many if the Greens were to leave parliament at this election. They have much to offer and have been constructive coalition partners.

New Zealand First

Winston Peters' party has made the most of the leverage they have enjoyed in the coalition. The Provincial Growth Fund has benefitted the regions, including Otago, and it has helped maintain the profile of NZF, and Shane Jones in particular.

Peters himself, as Deputy Prime Minister, has had some moments to show statesman-like qualities. However, he has also demonstrated his curmudgeonly side, more frequently recently, as he seeks to distinguish his brand from that of the coalition. We can expect more of this, particularly as the polling does not look good for NZF.

There is also the persistent whiff of scandal and cronyism around the NZF Foundation, and Peters' and Jones' links to the commercial fishing and horse-racing industries. The fishing industry in particular, is rife with non-compliance, but NZF routinely bats away claims of interference when efforts are made to extract greater accountability from operators.

There is evidence also to suggest that the public is growing tired of Peters' combative style and what many see as the unnecessary torpedoing of several of Labour's key policies.

On current polling, NZF looks as though they will leave parliament. It could be a sad, but some might say timely end, to the career of one of our most polarising politicians. But as they say, you can never write off Winston. He may well be back.



New Zealand First leader and Deputy Prime Minister Winston Peters. Source, <https://www.nzfirst.nz/team>

Your vote counts. Remember to use it.

We hope that this brief summary of the electoral playing field has helped somewhat. We don't have space to cover all of the other parties, most of whom, with the exception of ACT, and possibly the Māori Party, will not make it into parliament.

South Dunedin's unique cocktail of challenges; risk of flooding, coastal erosion, sea level rise, lower income, ethnically diverse population, many elderly and many with disabilities, poor quality housing, large number of rental properties, just got more complicated due to the effects of covid 19, with job losses and reduced incomes which potentially will impact on the local businesses.

We need a government that will not ignore this

picture and one that will work to address inequities, by making long-term systemic changes.

If you don't vote, as they say, you can't complain. Once every three years, kiwis get the chance to elect a government. You might think that your one vote doesn't matter, but it does. Your vote is incredibly powerful.

With the first of your two votes, you get to influence who will represent us in the Taieri (formerly South Dunedin) electorate. It's going to take awhile to get used to calling it by that name.

Your other vote is your party vote. More important than the electorate vote, this vote influences which party, or parties, will be in a position to form a government. In our MMP system, your vote carries a lot of weight. Remember to use it on October 17.