

Sir Paul Callaghan's "A dream worth having ... " hits 30,000 views

*The McGuinness Institute commemorates the success of Sir Paul Callaghan's
presentation at StrategyNZ in March 2011
with the release of six new videos*

Sir Paul Callaghan was at heart a physicist; he studied 'the particular' in order to understand 'the general'. He wanted to understand small events to make sense of big ones, applying the bottom-up approach rather than the top-down. This meant looking at successful New Zealand businesses to understand what makes an economy successful, and therefore a nation succeed. His book *Wool to Weta* was his attempt to assess what New Zealand does well. He believed there is a risk in the top-down approach; it is too easy to believe the hype and myths.

Sir Paul was a New Zealander who thought deeply, researched, interviewed, discussed and thought again. His life was a journey in excellence, striving for the stars while keeping his feet firmly on the ground. The YouTube video of his *StrategyNZ* presentation, which has now been viewed by over 30,000 people, is testament to his determination and generosity; he wanted to give something back. By doing so he challenged us to make our lives count.

Sir Paul wanted us to stress-test our thinking by questioning what is real and what is not. He did not want New Zealand to be taken in by any new craze or fashion that might come along. He wanted us to question our current understanding of what we do and how we do it, so that we build a solid foundation for our young people; one that not only accepts that trade-offs are necessary, but one where those trade-offs are based on fact.

This does not mean we need to adopt a culture of scepticism, but that we approach each public investment with a critical eye: does it make sense to invest here, what is the evidence that proves this is a good investment, what is the track record, what are the real costs, who is the customer, where are the sales coming from? Investing the public's funds, whether in science, education, health or resource management, always requires a proof of concept. Only when we remove sentiment by questioning our beliefs around New Zealand's people, its core capabilities, resources and education system are we truly able to develop a deeper understanding of what we do well.

Sir Paul was unique; he combined humour with narrative, critical thinking with vision, kindness with toughness and, most importantly, he combined questions about New Zealand's long-term future with potential answers. His message resonated: a vision of New Zealand as 'a place where talent wants to live'. He considered this 'a dream worth having'.

The Transit of Venus Forum held in Gisborne in June 2012 was one of Sir Paul's initiatives. Members of the McGuinness Institute were fortunate to attend the forum, where we recorded six insightful New Zealanders as they discussed their observations and thoughts regarding New Zealand's long-term future. They follow the mantra of Sir Paul, studying the particular in order to make sense of the general.

1. Professor Nigel French, Director of the Infectious Disease Research Centre, Massey University
[Catch Me If You Can: The hidden economic burden of infectious disease](#)
2. Dr Apirana Mahuika, Chairman of Te Runanga o Ngāti Porou
[Why We Need Relationships, Rather than Partnerships](#)
3. Al Morrison, Chief Executive and Director-General of the Department of Conservation
[A Nation of Causes: Managing biodiversity and resource allocation](#)
4. Craig Nevill-Manning, Engineering Director, Google, New York
[Why New Zealand Needs Planes](#)
5. Dame Anne Salmond, Professor of Māori Studies and Anthropology, University of Auckland
[Revegetate the Riverbanks: A national riverway project that works alongside out national cycleway project](#)
6. David Skilling, Director of Landfall Strategy Group, Singapore
[The World Is Lumpy](#)

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Background:

Sir Paul Callaghan was the keynote speaker at the [StrategyNZ: Mapping our Future](#) workshop held in Wellington on 30 March 2011. The 20-minute [YouTube](#) clip of Sir Paul's presentation has now received over 30,000 views, many of them in classrooms throughout New Zealand.

StrategyNZ: Mapping our Future saw over 100 participants gather at Te Papa to discuss what kind of future they wanted for New Zealand, and to map strategies to achieve their long-term goals for the country. Sir Paul's message resonated with the participants, and can be seen reflected in their strategy maps – see the Institute's [Report 13: StrategyNZ: Mapping our Future Strategy Maps](#) (published June 2011).

Sir Paul's thoughts can also be found in the foreword he contributed to our latest report, [Report 9: Science Embraced: Government-funded science under the microscope](#) (published February 2012).

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Links of interest:

[McGuinness Institute YouTube Channel](#)

[Transit of Venus 2012 YouTube Playlist](#)

[Report 13: *StrategyNZ: Mapping our Future: Strategy Maps* – June 2011](#)

[Other outputs from *StrategyNZ: Mapping our Future* – March 2011](#)