

Chris Milne - TV Public Meeting

Thank you Chris for setting the scene so well and for your ongoing work in supporting Technology Valley.

As you will have gathered, and which I can confirm, Chris has been a terrific champion for Technology Valley, and it does help when you have a photographer with you wherever you go!

It's fair to say that what the Hutt Valley can offer has been pretty much below the radar for many years, particularly in government circles. And even Wellingtonians, and let's be honest here, have viewed the Hutt as a sleepy dormitory, whose purpose has been to disgorge daily hordes of Gliding On cannon fodder workers.

For at least the last two generations, the idea that the Hutt is a dynamic place, with internationally competitive science and manufacturing based businesses has not featured strongly in regional or national psyche.

It has been a hard slog recovering from the turmoil of the 1980s restructuring, which saw mass closures and lay offs. If you look at a graph of the Hutt's population and GDP over the last 100 years everything goes swimmingly well until the late 80s. Then it plateaus, and the population starts to age.

As Chris has said, this has been a cause for concern for years. The city fathers, and mothers I'm bound to say these days, have worried away at the problem.

Every city and region, apart from those already wildly successful, frets over its place in the world.

But fretting gets you nowhere.

Some deep thought has gone into answering the questions – what is the Hutt's truly competitive advantage and how can we grow our prosperity and everything good that flows from that?

This has to be more than a slogan or tagline, as these produce nothing but warm feelings and, if you get it wrong, derision. I can think of “We’ve got the lot” as a disastrous foray into this territory.

Technology Valley, I believe, is exactly the answer for the Hutt Valley. It builds on our undoubted strengths, which are right now highly successful science and manufacturing businesses – we call them STEM businesses – primary scientific research, tertiary institutions, supportive city councils and, most of all, a growing belief in the business community that we can succeed.

The evidence of success is growing. We are the home of Marine Air Systems. The only New Zealand company ever to list on the Nasdaq Technology Exchange. Neville Jordan, now Sir Neville Jordan sold his business in 1999 to a California company for \$60m. Not bad for a business that started in his mother’s spare bedroom 23 years earlier.

Many great businesses start very small. Bill Gates likes to tease Europeans, who also fret about the state of their economies, and not without reason. He asks Germans “why couldn’t Microsoft have started in Germany?”. The answer is because in Germany it’s illegal to start a business in a garage with no windows.

Let’s look at another outstanding Petone business. I’m talking about Sanpro Industries. Sanpro, according to Google Maps, is 6 minutes walk from here. As Chris has told you, Sanpro is a world leading company, which makes machines that manufacture parts for mufflers. Malcolm Sanderson started this business in his garage. When I told him the Bill Gates joke he told me that it wasn’t a joke as far as he was concerned as he’d started his business in his garage and council officers had visited him to encourage him to move.

You cannot plan these business successes from above. Councils and governments can prod and incentivise and cajole, but no one can bail up a Neville Jordan or a Malcolm Sanderson and tell them to get to work. For

one thing, by the time you get to their front door they will already have been working for a couple of hours no matter how early you get there.

Technology Valley is about joining up people. It's about building a belief in our place in the world and about our ability to succeed. Many of our great and promising businesses are heads down getting on with their work and don't realise what else is happening or available in the valley. There is enormous untapped scope to leverage off businesses that are already here.

Technology Valley is about facilitating the sharing of skills and knowledge, and demonstrating to our young people that there are great opportunities and careers to be had in STEMM. There is more opportunity in life than getting on the 7.35am from Waterloo in your shorts and sandals and heading into a large office block in Wellington.

What is new about the latest manifestation of Technology Valley, apart from the logo – yes I know that the cynics will say that when you can't think of anything better to do you design a new logo – the new thing which we are going to launch at the Technology Valley Awards is a formal legal structure to move this forward.

It will be a membership-based incorporated society, led initially by an establishment committee, but in due course, three years to be exact, the reserved places on that committee will lapse and the organisation will be run by its members.

I am very grateful for the support I've received and for the team we have in place to move this forward.

We have:

- Conrad Lendrum from Callaghan Innovation
- Dr Des Darby, formerly a leading scientist from GNS
- Grant Lumsden from WREDA
- Jo Coughlan from Wellington City Council
- Joe Manning from GNS

- Rees Ward from the Wellington ICT Graduate School
- Seby Reeves from ANZ, representing the Chamber of Commerce
- Stephen Nicholas from Deloitte Private, who runs the Deloitte Fast 50 Index
- Tony Grantham from the Open Polytechnic
- Kim Kelly and Irwin Munroe from Hutt City Council.
- And David Miller from Vantage Consulting Group

David Miller represents the founding group who pushed hard for Technology Valley over the past several years – and I'd like to acknowledge Charles Peterson who is here tonight, who has worked tirelessly for Technology Valley.

You might ask, where are the industry representatives in this group, who we are going to hand the organisation over to? Remember, we are aiming for Technology Valley to be industry led. They are coming and we will be announcing who they are in the next few weeks.

I'd like to acknowledge Deputy Mayor David Bassett who is standing in for Mayor Ray Wallace, who was intending to be here tonight but this afternoon has had to cancel. Ray has been very supportive over a long period of time for Technology Valley and it was a key plank in his first election to mayor. He has followed through, rare amongst politicians. Later in this meeting David will be speaking about the Council's role and how he sees Technology Valley building our prosperity.

Those of you who are here today are here because, I assume, you are all interested in Technology Valley. Some of you, and I hope many of you, will want to be involved.

The best things you can do is to leave your business card on the desk at the entrance and to sign up to our MeetUp group and like our Facebook page.

We will keep you in touch with developments and look forward to seeing you again.

It's now my pleasure to introduce the next speaker, Kayne Horsham. Kayne is the founder of another outstanding success story in the Valley. Kaynemaile is 11 minutes walk from here and 5 minutes walk from Sanpro.

It's been said that "If you can't get it in Petone, you can't get it." That's very true.

Kayne is going to tell us how true that slogan is, how by tapping into local businesses he was able to land very large international contracts for his company. He tells me that he simply couldn't have succeeded without access to the technical ecosystem in the Hutt.

It's a story of collaboration, gritty inventiveness, tenacity and entrepreneurial flair.

Who would have believed that a request from Peter Jackson to Kayne to find a way of dressing Lord of the Rings soldiers in medieval mail weighing less than 10kg would have resulted, ultimately, in an architectural product being installed in buildings in Australia, USA, Middle East and Europe. The product has many more uses than that, including as an excluder of seals salmon farms.

Once again, you can't plan this. What is necessary though is a community that spawns this sort of optimism, belief and commitment to success. These are virtues that Technology Valley seeks to nurture.

I have great confidence that if we see this through then the Hutt Valley will be known, regionally and nationally as a centre of excellence for manufacturing, STEMM and business growth. Businesses will locate here, jobs will grow, our local economy will grow and the Hutt will be a dynamic and highly successful region.

Marine Air Systems, Formway, Sanpro and Kaynemaile don't have to be the exception. We can, and will, have many more of them.

Let me welcome Kayne Horsham, founder of Kaynemaile, and one of the most brilliant businessmen I've met.