



Outlook

Tiakina te Taiao Newsletter - July 2025

From NZ Tertiary Education Union <jared.commerer@teu.ac.nz>**Date** Thu 10/07/2025 09:22**To** Jared Commerer <jared.commerer@teu.ac.nz>

Tiakina te Taiao Newsletter July 2025

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Climate and Tertiary Education: The Current Landscape

Climate change is increasingly shaping the landscape of tertiary education in Aotearoa New Zealand – from the direct impacts of extreme weather events on staff, to shifts in research priorities, funding settings, and institutional leadership. As our sector navigates major structural changes, it is more important than ever to centre climate action and sustainability in our collective work.

To those whose homes, campuses, or communities have been impacted by recent severe weather, we send our aroha and solidarity.

Tiakina te Taiao is building a database and photo repository to visually document how climate change is affecting our tertiary education sector. If you've captured images of climate-related damage at your workplace – and are happy for them to be shared publicly in our newsletters and research reports – we'd love to hear from you. Please let us know when and where the event occurred. Before and after photos are very powerful, or images of mitigation measures that have been made on campuses (e.g. flood mitigation).

Please send your photos to jared.commerer@teu.ac.nz

Upcoming Network Meeting – Wednesday 23 July, 12:00pm

We're looking forward to reconnecting for our second full network meeting of 2025. We're especially pleased to be joined by Dr Ruth Irwin, who will speak about her new book *Economic Futures: Climate Change and Modernity* (2024) and explore the complex relationship between economic growth and climate change (see below for more details).

Date: Wednesday 23 July

Time: 12:00-1:00pm

Agenda:

1. Ruth Irwin – *Economic Futures: Climate Change and Modernity*
2. Tiakina te Taiao Workplan Update
3. General business

Featured Speaker: Ruth Irwin on *Economic Futures: Climate Change and Modernity*

Climate change is a 'wicked problem' that seems intractable. Sustainable technology is getting better and better, but somehow, climate emissions keep escalating.

This talk looks squarely at the role that economic growth plays in accelerating climate change. It looks at the driver of economic growth, in ex nihilo credit creation, and the way that excessive new money saturates the exchange value of fiat money. Inflation and price rises create fertile grounds for more economic growth – and with it, increased CO2.

The economic growth model is fundamental to modern governance, and it is still very difficult to critically examine economic growth without becoming a pariah. Nevertheless, as the global temperature already exceeds the safe upper limit of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, it is imperative that we revisit the fundamentals of economic growth, understand how it functions, and begin the task of creating better ways to manage the global economy.



Ruth Irwin is the author of the new book *Economic Futures: Climate Change and Modernity*, and 5 other books: *Heidegger, Politics, and Climate Change* (2008), *Philosophy and Climate Change* (2010), *The Handbook of New Zealand Education Policy* (2010), *Beyond the Free Market* (2014), and *Wild Pedagogies* (2018). She was the Head of School and Professor of Education at the University of Aberdeen, and Head of Department at the University of Fiji. She worked in Business Ethics at AUT, and Philosophy and Political Theory at the University of Auckland.

TEU Climate Pulse Survey: How Climate Change is Affecting our Members

A recent pulse survey by the Tiakina te Taiao Advisory Group shows that climate change is having a real impact on members' lives – both at home and at work.

- **40% of respondents** reported that extreme weather events such as flooding, landslides, and coastal erosion had affected their homes and neighbourhoods.
- These events often caused stress, disrupted work and study, and placed additional pressure on households.
- **80% of respondents** said their workplaces should be doing more on climate action and sustainability; many also called for stronger leadership and meaningful involvement in shaping decisions.

Respondents highlighted key policy areas that impact climate and sustainability education in our tertiary education sector:

- Tertiary education and funding cuts (78%)

- Changes to Marsden funding (75%)
- Disestablishment of Te Pūkenga (43%)

Concerns were also raised about the erosion of interdisciplinary research and academic freedom – both crucial for advancing climate mitigation and adaptation.

Read the [full report here](#).

Tiakina te Taiao Report: The Case for Climate Clauses in the TEU Industrial Strategy

One of Tiakina te Taiao's objectives for 2024-2025 is to support the integration of climate-related clauses into the TEU National Industrial Strategy. This strategy, reviewed every three years by TEU's Industrial and Professional Committee (IPC), sets the direction for the union's industrial work – including national claims and core employment conditions.

As climate change increasingly affects TEU members, it is critical that our industrial strategy responds to these challenges.

Earlier this year, the Tiakina te Taiao Advisory Group presented a paper to IPC making the case for including climate clauses in the strategy. The paper outlines the effects of climate change on tertiary education, reviews examples of climate clauses used by other tertiary education unions, assesses those already present in TEU collective agreements, and offers a series of recommendations for action.

We're pleased to share that IPC has endorsed the recommendations in full.

You can [read the paper here](#).

Catching the Wave: Educator Perspectives on Regenerative Education

Tiakina te Taiao member Dr Sally Birdsall (University of Auckland) and colleagues have released a new report exploring environmental and sustainability education in Australasia.

In 2018, the Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand (EIANZ) invited the Australian Association for Environmental Education (AAEE) and the New Zealand Association for Environmental Education (NZAEE) to co-develop a position statement on environmental education. To inform this, an anonymous survey was sent to members of all three organisations, and workshops were

run at each association's annual conference.

[Catching the Wave](#) presents the findings from this process, shedding light on how educators across the region understand and practice environmental education. It also includes recommendations for how the associations – including in the tertiary sector – can better advocate for strong environmental education policy and practice.

The report was [launched on World Environment Day](#), and feedback is now being sought as a position paper is co-developed.

You are invited to share your thoughts on the position of the associations involved via [this 6-question survey](#), open until Friday 11 July.

Conference: Adaptation Futures 2025

Registrations are open for [Adaptation Futures 2025: Accelerating Adaptation Action](#), taking place in Christchurch from 13-16 October.

With over 200 sessions, the conference will explore key themes such as:

- Indigenous innovation and leadership
- Ocean, islands, and futures
- Cities, settlements, and infrastructure
- The food, water, and biodiversity nexus
- Health, wellbeing, and future generations
- The art of adaptation, communication, and education
- Beyond adaptation

Check out [the programme](#), consider [registering](#), and let us know if you are going to be attending.

Call for Expressions of Interest: TEU Climate Action Delegates

Tiakina te Taiao's primary objective for 2024-2025 is to establish Climate Action Delegates at each TEU branch.

Our Climate Action Delegates work to ensure a tertiary education sector that is actively contributing to a just and sustainable future through high-quality research, teaching, and institutional leadership, as well as the provision of exemplary working conditions.

For more information about what our Climate Action Delegates do, [see our flyer](#).

To express an interest in becoming a TEU Climate Action Delegate, please contact jared.commerer@teu.ac.nz

Items of interest

- [Ipsos Aotearoa New Zealand – People and Climate Change Report 2025](#) (Ipsos)
- [How gender inequality and climate change are interconnected](#) (UN Women)
- [Energy sector unites to future-proof tomorrow's workforce](#) (Energy Resources Aotearoa)
- [New Zealand government sued over 'dangerously inadequate' emissions reduction plan](#) (The Guardian) (also see [NZCTU's response](#))
- [The Trump administration has shut down more than 100 climate studies](#) (MIT Technology Review)
- [University of Auckland to co-host global sustainability congress](#) (University of Auckland)
- [Otago offers new degrees in Sustainable Energy](#) (University of Otago)
- [Climate stressors are impacting our primary schools | New Zealand Council for Educational Research](#) (NZCER)

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