In 1938, Labour led the world in creating a social safety net for New Zealand citizens, a public health system that survives to this day, and state housing for the poor and vulnerable. Labour’s vision for New Zealanders today remains cemented in the value of equal opportunity for all – in healthcare, education, employment and housing.

This year marks a century since the founding of the Labour Party in New Zealand. To celebrate this special occasion, an exhibition was held in Dunedin with a focus on the major achievements of the Labour Party over the past 100 years, especially the contributions of MPs from the South.

The Southern Labour Centenary Exhibition was held in the Dunedin Community Gallery for a week in late September. The gallery opened each day with a new theme and corresponding public events, including speeches by current and former Labour MPs, panel discussions, debates, and film screenings. Congratulations to the many contributors. The heart of Labour is strong after 100 years!

Christmas is just around the corner. I’d like to invite you all to the Opoho Bowling Club at 80 Lovelock Ave on Sunday 11th of December from 4pm for the annual Dunedin North Christmas barbecue. Bring a plate, and flat shoes for a game of bowls. RSVP to (03) 474 1973 or rsvp@davidclark.org.nz
Hospital rebuild
Keeping the pressure on

Even though it is now agreed across the political spectrum that our hospital desperately needs updating, there is open debate about the specifics, and uncertainty as to whether the current Government is pursuing a rebuild with the urgency and transparency it should. Our hospital today serves a geographic area twice the size of Belgium, containing around 300,000 people. Access to high-quality, affordable healthcare remains a priority for the South and I will continue to fight for a comprehensive rebuild of Dunedin Hospital as we move toward the next election.

Dunedin Hospital celebrated its 150th anniversary on the Great King St site in August. Once upon a time, the converted exhibition building we all know as Dunedin Hospital was considered a huge step up from the city’s original hospital building in the Octagon. However, recent findings from a strategic assessment of the hospital rebuild have painted a pretty dire picture of the health facility’s current state.

The Sapere Research Group’s strategic assessment of the Dunedin Hospital rebuild was supposed to be a major step towards getting the $300 million project off the ground. It was supposed to provide clarity around the timing, size, make-up and location of the rebuild, and reassurance around other contentious issues. Instead, when the assessment report was released in mid-September, we were left with no obvious pathway out of the Southern DHB’s enormous deficit, and no indication of rebuild options until next year (or details a year after that).

During their lunch break, students from the University of Otago’s Dunedin School of Medicine sign my petition to rebuild Dunedin Hospital. They see the harmful consequences of an outdated, rundown health facility on a regular basis.

Otago Farmers’ Market
Building community with food

I love the farmers’ market. If I’m in town, there’s a good chance you’ll find me there on a Saturday morning. It’s a place I can go and run into people I haven’t seen for a while – who are out doing some shopping – and also have regular conversations with the vendors.

It’s a chance to build a bit of community. The kind of conversations you have while you’re out, just going about your daily chores and chatting as you go, are different conversations than you might have when someone formally comes into your office. So it’s tremendous for me from that perspective.

I like supporting the farmers’ market too because it’s about Otago. It’s about the stuff we do here and it’s stuff that’s done really well. The food is amazing – I don’t often get away without buying something to eat along the journey, and of course taking something home for later. So it’s a neat place for community, a neat place for food, and a neat place for Otago.

Keep an eye out on www.facebook.com/DavidClarkMP for a short video of my market tour coming soon!
Valuing humanities

In June it was revealed that a major review of the University of Otago’s Division of Humanities could lead to staff cuts. An announcement was then made in August that, due to a sustained decline in student numbers since 2010, five humanities departments would likely face staff cuts totalling 15-20 people over three months.

As the local MP, and three times over a proud humanities graduate, I am grateful to add my voice to the growing chorus of voices frustrated at the increasingly marginal place of humanities in our universities.

Though debate about the changing nature of universities and of wider society is not the exclusive purview of humanities academics, voices from the humanities feature prominently in social and political critique. These voices are healthy to a functioning democracy and must not be lost.

Threatened staff cuts in the humanities at Otago could be avoided if Labour’s three years’ free post-secondary education policy was introduced. Other faculties would benefit too.

The number of people enrolling in tertiary study has fallen by nearly 20 percent in less than a decade. In part this is because education has become unaffordable for many. Labour’s three years’ free scheme would be phased in over successive terms - one free year at a time.

And it is not just students that would benefit. Dunedin stands to gain around $233 million if the University grows by 15 percent – the expected response to our policy – as well as more than 2000 new jobs.

I believe in the value of a diverse and rich humanities education. And I implore the relevant decision makers to look to the future where the adaptability, creativity, resilience, and critical thinking of humanities graduates is likely to be in greater demand than ever.

Members of the public rally to support staff and students of the Humanities Division at Otago. Two such rallies have taken place since staff cuts across the division were announced in August, each drawing crowds of over 200.

An interview with Jesse Teat from Tussock Innovation

As the MP for Dunedin North, I like to get around local businesses whenever I can. It’s a great way to engage with local people and to get a feel for the business landscape across Dunedin North.

When I visited Tussock Innovation in the Warehouse Precinct recently, here’s what one of its co-directors, Jesse, had to say.

How would you describe Tussock Innovation?
We’re designers and manufacturers of bespoke hardware and software products. Our solutions are designed with a focus on usability and cutting edge innovation.

Why the name “Tussock Innovation”?
My business partner Mark and I have our roots in the mountains of Otago. When we’re not in the office, you’ll probably find us amongst the Otago tussock - biking, hunting, hiking, or skiing in the mountains.

What big changes has Tussock Innovation undergone since its inception?
We are now in our third year of operation and have identified a demand for a new type of product offering. Over the next few months, we’ll be releasing “Swiftlet”, an ecosystem providing an all-in-one remote sensing and control solution for enterprises.

What big changes do you predict for Tussock Innovation over the next few years?
We have plans to go global with Swiftlet. The first demo devices will be available this month, with installations in Auckland, Dunedin, Tauranga, Sydney, and Ottawa; and travelling worldwide with “ng Connect”. We expect to see our team grow in size too, taking on staff in marketing and product assembly over the next six months.

Why set up Tussock Innovation in Dunedin?
Dunedin has been a great home to Mark and I over the past 10+ years. We both studied at the University of Otago and decided to stay put. We rely on intelligent university and polytechnic alumni to staff our business. Dunedin also offers a great lifestyle, so couple that with our gigabit connectivity and you’ve got a recipe for business success.

To learn more, visit www.tussockinnovation.com
Admiring the harbour view from Dunedin Rudolf Steiner School and Kindergarten: school board member Silkae Templeton, Roberta Campbell, Principal Rachel Barrington, and Leonie Rousselot. Their school fair is on Sunday 1st of November from 11am - 3pm, so head along to see for yourself and join in the festivities.

“Restored” this beauty myself several years ago. Was rapt to blow off a few cobwebs with a quick lunchtime ride in the sun. Must remember to adjust the seat height when I get a chance.

Labour Leader Andrew Little and I held a campus clinic at the University of Otago a few weeks back to chat with students about Labour’s Working Futures Plan - providing three years’ free post-secondary school education and training.

Really enjoyed being at the East Otago Field Days. Was almost convinced by Adam Robertson to trade my van in for this red beast! Congratulations to the Palmerston and Waihemo A&P Committee for organising such a successful event.

Jesse Teat and Mark Butler, co-directors of Tussock Innovation, explain to me their sophisticated new Active Drag Analysis System - a sled and iPad app used by elite swimmers to measure active drag and power output. Fascinating stuff!

Received a lesson in flower arranging from Shirley Brunton at the Redroofs Care Home recently. It was a pleasant surprise running into Shirley there - we met previously when she was on the Committee of the Port Chalmers Town Hall Society.

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