

Who are you? Why are you running in Dunedin? What got you into politics?

First and foremost, I love Dunedin. I originally came here as a student and fell in love with the place and although I've worked elsewhere, I've always come back to it. I ran a student residence (Selwyn College) where I was a student myself originally. I greatly enjoy my long and ongoing association with the University, effectively being the MP on Campus – with my office nice and close by we get lots of engagement with students. It's a community that I love and enjoy representing and I hope that people will continue to support me in doing that.

David has been associated with the Labour party since 2011 as the MP for the Dunedin North (now Dunedin) Electorate.

Over his last term in Parliament he has introduced a number of Bills including the Misuse of drugs (Medicinal Cannabis) Amendment Bill (allowing a defense for medicinal use of Cannabis in certain circumstances) and the Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission Bill (introducing a Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission).

Outside of politics David has three children, is a competitive cyclist and has twice completed an ironman triathlon. Before becoming an MP he was ordained as a Presbyterian Minister and celebrated the civil union of MP Grant Robertson.

What is your favorite Otago memory?

He says he has millions of them. He greatly enjoyed his time as a scarfie. Equally he has greatly enjoyed being part of the different aspects of student life, through halls, post-graduate study and as the representative. Overall, he struggles to pick one of his many happy times on campus.

What is your stance on Universal Student Allowance?

He said the Labour tertiary policy was to come. David thinks the thing to note from the outset is that the focus has been on the COVID recovery and therefore they have had to prioritize the greatest need first. He said it is arguable that universal student allowance is not that. When he worked at Treasury, he learnt that many people would go to university but do not because it is too expensive and too intimidating. He argues that fees-free has made a difference in getting over this boundary. Another thing he has taken away from it is that once students are in the university system they benefit from tertiary education over their lifetime, personally, economically and in terms of the opportunities available to them. It also benefits their families. We need to let people know about the economic and personal benefits in terms of social well-being provided they know they have that opportunity. They have to know about these benefits

Do you support the reinstatement of the post graduate student allowance?

He says that this is something that is still being thought about but after covid-19 there has been a reprioritization as a result of the pressing health and economic needs. This is not a priority right now.

What are your thoughts around the burgeoning housing crisis in Dunedin? What would do to improve the state of Dunedin's housing?

David thinks that the rental warrant of fitness, which the Government has passed means that there is an expectation that housing is livable and supports health. He is proud that the government has taken meaningful steps in this regard

In terms of housing stock, he says that this government has built more houses than any government since the 1970s. And they will continue to build houses. This is necessary because many people cannot afford houses. The most important thing is that people have sufficient income. However, this is complicated and we have seen landlord price increases in response to changes in benefits. David states that this is one of the main things the Labour Government stands for

Do you think Universities are overly reliant on international students? How should they better support the students they already have?

The interesting thing is that lots of Universities are reliant on the International Student income. However, Otago has developed quite sensible policies, which it was criticized for by the previous government. The important thing is that when International Students are here they are well looked after. Otago takes this very seriously and pastoral care is something Otago is very proud of. He thinks that focus, alongside the Interim Code of Pastoral Care and the permanent one will make sure that International Students are looked after.

He also states that the drop off in demand for domestic tertiary studies has led to questions about how the institutions are supported and this is an issue this Government wants to address

Do you think we have too many tertiary institutions at the moment?

His personal view is that he does not think that New Zealand has too many institutions, especially as we are seeing growth in the sector as people look to upskill and broaden their horizons. He thinks that in the reforms of the polytechnic sector have endeavored to share best practice across the sector so different institutions don't have to keep reinventing the wheel to produce more efficient and better quality education.

Do you support a law change to enable OUSA to get a spectrometer and prove drug checking to students?

David notes that the spectrometer is legal and there is nothing to stop OUSA from doing this. However, this issue is around the wording of the legislation and whether testing is acceptable or not. When David was the Health Minister he encouraged a project around research for drug testing. He thinks this was the logical thing to do; he is in favour of sensible drug reform and an evidence based approach, focusing on the health issues. Arresting people has never proved to be effective. There are drugs in our community, legal and otherwise and we should take a harm-based approach and ensure that people are educated about these risks.

How will you be voting in the Cannabis Referendum?

David highlights that this is a personal vote and he is just one of a number of people who will vote. However, he is well on record that he will vote in favor because he focusses on sensible drug law reform, but emphasized that it is a personal vote.

How will you support the LGBTQIA+ Community?

He believes he has always been approachable in this regard; back in the day he was a civil union celebrant and back in the 90s, when he was a parish minister in the Presbyterian Church, his parish was the only one with an openly gay minister and one of his first TV debates was speaking about equity in the religious sphere. He believes that everyone has the right to have their voices heard and be respected regardless of their orientation or belief. He believes everyone should be treated fairly and with dignity regardless of their orientation or belief.

How have you engaged in the Black Lives Matter Movement? What do you think is the pathway forward for reducing racial inequity in New Zealand?

This is an issue of justice. The simple analysis is that there is disadvantage and advantage inherited in our country due to historic situations. As a society we need to look at these issues and put them right. In NZ, we have a special relationship with Māori and one of the things David did as Minister of Health was to appoint Māori chairs of DHBs. Before he was elected there were none but now there is 4. He did not struggle to find good candidates. Māori are willing to serve to make sure we have a system that is more fair and equitable and this is across the board e.g. including Māori in decision-making in the justice system. David says if we want to change the system we need to look at who is in decision-making

Do you support defunding the Police and prisons?

David notes that in responding to synthetic cannabis, the Labour Party supported the shift within the police to a health-based approach. He states that we know that the statistics did not favour Māori and therefore, he believes there are lots of things like this that we can do that will improve people's lives

What are your thoughts on a parallel system of justice as proposed by Moana Jackson?

He states that he is broadly familiar with the proposal. He thinks some of the Māori based justice systems, which go to ensuring we have kaupapa Māori and whānau centered and supported systems of justice are good. He thinks where they work they make a big difference and therefore, they should be supported. However, the whole justice system needs to be accessible to Māori so he supports, as in the health systems and the proposed reform of it, a much stronger Māori voice. Further he states that there should be an expectation that the implementation of these systems includes cultural safety and awareness. He notes that most Māori continue to access mainstream services, although there should also be Māori specific services

How are you going to support the mental health sector?

He is very proud of the \$1.9B invested in mental health. There is a programme rolling out over 5 years that will help those with mild to moderate mental health needs that will be freely accessible to all people over NZ. This is a huge shift in NZ where we have traditionally under-recognized mental health issues. This could affect anyone and yet somehow in our history we have not taken this as seriously as we should. He is really proud of the initial process he has been involved in making, but it takes time to train people and bring together those with lived experience.

How would you respond to climate change and how would your policies centre indigenous and pasifika culture and practices?

Maori and Pacific world views have shown the way for respecting the environment and recognizing that it is part of us. Many people have recognized the benefit of that worldview - we cannot carry on without the planet. We are lucky to have this in New Zealand. David worked on climate change issues in the treasury and David Parker's office when he was the minister for the environment. During the time he was there, they were able to put a price on carbon. This was not politically popular at the time but they did it anyway and put in place a scheme that priced in the negative externalities. Although National undid a lot of this, the debate and changed and people now believe that there needs to be a market that supports good and punishes bad behaviour. The environment affects us all and we can use the market to support it. However, we also need to take other actions. They (Labour) banned off-shore oil exploration and single use plastic bags, actions which support our environment. We need to set up market structures to encourage good behaviour, but also other actions to steer people in the right directions. There is a lot of risk in investing in fossil fuels in the future and we need to encourage the commercial sector to recognize that

What are the biggest areas you personally want to see change?

One of the things David feels really proud of are the initial changes around working for families, and how they are ensuring young families are supported. He is proud of the changes leading to the zero carbon act and the creation of the gun buy-back scheme, capturing a real focus of the population and recognising that we need a change.

He is proud that we are making justice, health and education more affordable and more accessible and proud of making cheaper doctors' appointments.

He encourages students to think about politics regardless of their ideology, so that we can have a good parliamentary democracy and advocate for the interests of New Zealand. He says that politics can be a rough ride but it's worth it, and he is happy to talk to people who are will to serve in that way and help them do so