

Land is Whānau

Ocean Dutta
Hastings Girls' High School

Ocean was one of five young speakers invited to address the new HBRC councillors on Wednesday 12 November 2025. Their brief: to talk about what the environment means to them, their hopes for Hawke's Bay a generation from now – and the message they want councillors to take with them.

Kia ora kotou katoa
Ko Ocean tōku ingoa
He ākongā ahau Hastings Girls' High School

I moved here from India three years ago. And in India, environmental policy felt distant – something that happened in government buildings, disconnected from daily life. Here I learned that land isn't something that you can learn from a distance. What struck me about Aotearoa wasn't just its beauty, but the way people treated land as if it's whānau.

Being a youth environment ambassador showed me that my generation doesn't need convincing about climate change or biodiversity loss. We grew up with these realities. What we need is leaders willing to act – and so thank you for letting our voices be heard.

But listening isn't enough. In 25 years, I hope to see native birds filling our wetlands again, and each river one we can swim in. And, most importantly, I hope that climate action is no longer a goal we simply talk about, but a way of life that defines our region.

My hope for our councillors is that you continue to lead with courage, compassion and care. And continue to allow young people to get involved because we will be living with your choices long after your term ends.

Ngā mihi nui.