

Rt Hon Helen Clark - Statement on Resignation of Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern. 19 January 2023.

It was with deep sadness that I received the news on waking in Europe this morning that Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern is stepping down.

During almost five and a half years as Prime Minister, Jacinda has done an extraordinary job in leading New Zealand through major crises, delivering on a large social policy agenda aimed at rebuilding opportunity and fairness, presiding over an economy which has performed better than most of its peers in challenging global circumstances, and positioning New Zealand as a country which stands for international co-operation and decent values.

The pressures on Prime Ministers are always great, but in this era of social media, clickbait, and 24/7 media cycles, Jacinda has faced a level of hatred and vitriol which in my experience is unprecedented in our country. Our society could now usefully reflect on whether it wants to continue to tolerate the excessive polarisation which is making politics an increasingly unattractive calling.

Much will be written about Jacinda's substantial and significant legacy. For now, I express my gratitude to Jacinda for the humanity and empathy she brought to leadership, and wish her and her family well for the next chapters of their lives.