

# Climate Change Consultation Contribution

## Submission on Climate Change targets for New Zealand

Submitted by Elizabeth Allen



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I thank the government and the Ministry of the Environment for giving me this opportunity to put forward my views on climate change and the target New Zealand should set at the Paris Meeting in December.

In New Zealand we have been talking about climate change since 1979 and successive governments have done little to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions since then. In fact rather than reduce them they have increased. In fact there has been an 111% increase in greenhouse gas emissions since 1990. It is clear that the longer we talk about doing something and continue to do nothing the cost of inaction will far outweigh the small cost of committing ourselves to doing something now.

**Recommendation:** My solution for this inaction is to have a cross party accord. Climate change is too big, too important to our, and our children and grandchildren's futures to be left to one party with all its ideological baggage to come up with a viable solution. It is time the National led government reached out to the opposition parties and together set a target for emissions reductions.

The consultation document focuses heavily on the cost of the reduction in emissions yet does not mention the costs of doing nothing. We are already seeing what doing nothing means with increasing sea temperatures, extreme weather events, rising sea levels inundating land each king tide, drought, health issues caused by increased temperatures, pollution and so on costing billions of dollars. The fixation on the short-term costs of taking action is flawed and damaging. We need to invest in a safe and prosperous future where we're all better off. The World Bank warns that the longer action is delayed, the more costs will rise for each following generation. Taking action to cut carbon pollution in New Zealand creates benefits like cleaner air, less dependence on foreign oil, better human health and more liveable cities. New Zealand has so often led the way in innovation and I believe by taking action now we can be a positive example to other countries, pioneer solutions the rest of the world needs, and capture new economic opportunities.

**Recommendation:** That the government, in a cross party accord, set the target for emissions reduction of 40% below 1990 levels. If the cost of this is only \$1800 per household per year I suggest it is certainly worth doing.

How will the government achieve this?

### 1. Institute a policy of keeping fossil fuels in the ground.

Place a moratorium on all gas, coal and oil exploration and develop a phase out programme for the use of fossil fuel in manufacturing and transport. Technology is mentioned in the Discussion Document. Technology is rapidly catching up with the need to be carbon free. In the past five years technology has come a long way and in the next five will go even further. By 2025 I can see, that

with courage and vision the move to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from transport by 50% is possible. By setting this target and encouraging R&D in electric vehicles including solar powered I believe fossil fuel businesses will diversify away from unsustainable practices to sustainable ones.

## **2. Encourage and support the use of fuel efficient vehicles, rail and public transport**

Initiatives such as exempting electric vehicles from road user charges until 2020 and introducing a fuel economy labelling scheme for vehicles is good but does not go far enough. Measures regarding use of fuel inefficient vehicles need to be tougher. Road user charges for heavy transport vehicles need to be higher and the use of rail encouraged and supported. Strong initiatives encouraging and facilitating more use of public transport need to be explored and implemented. Encourage and support cycle ways in cities. Auckland has made a start but it needs much, much more. Once public transport and rail options are strengthened then increase the fuel taxes to the point where people choose to either walk, cycle or take public transport to work. I do not believe investing in biofuel is a good idea.

## **3. Initiate a plan to make New Zealand electricity generation 100% renewable by 2025.**

The target of increasing renewable electricity generation to 90 per cent by 2025 is too low. Already we are seeing a rapid uptake of household solar power generation. The lines company Vector is partnering with Tesla to bring in their storage batteries. Solar electricity generating is possible for each household and I would like to see the government take a leadership role in planning for and encouraging renewable energy sources. Systems are only going to get cheaper over time and the storage batteries more efficient, so by 2025 I believe that we could be easily 100% renewable.

## **4. Place a moratorium on land development for dairy farming.**

Too much land is being converted to an unsustainable agricultural practice. Forests are being cut down at an accelerating rate and dairy conversions on dryland farms being allowed. The only way these enterprises are able to exist is by using irrigation which accelerates nitrification and depletes the water table. We do not want to end up like California. Investing \$10 million annually in research for new agricultural mitigation technologies through the Pastoral Greenhouse Gas Research Consortium and the New Zealand Agricultural Greenhouse Gas Research Centre is good but a long term strategy that will have little effect on our largest source of emissions in the near term.

## **5. A policy of replacing harvested forests and creating permanent forest sinks**

I agree that encouraging and supporting permanent afforestation such as through the Permanent Forest Sink Initiative is a great idea. But there needs to be a stop to the de forestation for the purposes of dairy farming. Take a drive from Taupo to Rotorua and you will see the vast tracts of bulldozed young forest now in pasture.

### **Summary:**

There is an exciting opportunity if we are brave enough to embrace a low carbon future without fossil fuel use and I strongly believe we need to abandon the notion of the impacts and costs on the economy of taking action and instead focus on the costs of inaction. It is time for boldness and courage. To those countries taking a strong stand on climate change New Zealand must seem like a nation of mice. I want to be proud of our leadership not ashamed of it for its lack of courage. We need to take bold action now because if we don't the planet will take action while we sit by and watch.