Consultation on setting New Zealand’s post-2020 climate change target

Copy of your submission

Contact information

Name    Ben

Organisation (if applicable)

Address

Telephone

Email

Objectives for the contribution

Do you agree with these objectives for our contribution?  Yes

1b. What is most important to you?
Costs and Impacts need to be discussed fairly - not in the lopsided way they are currently. The discussion document has only focused on the costs of taking action without quantifying the costs of not taking action which the Treasury have estimate to be up to $52 billion. There are also many benefits to health, environment, biodiversity of taking action which have also not been quantified - these need to be if we are to have a frank and open discussion. We cannot use our ‘unique national circumstances’ for not taking action - we HAVE to take action NOW if we want to have any hope of mitigating the impacts of Climate Change. The Government needs to start taking action putting policy in place right now with support from across the political spectrum to create a credible plan of how we are going to reach our target. They can’t just leave the task to future Governments where each change of Government brings about major policy change.

What would be a fair contribution for New Zealand?

2. What do you think the nature of New Zealand’s emissions and economy means for the level of target that we set?
We need to set a binding target of at least 40% reduction in 1990 emissions by 2030 to give us a chance of keeping temperature rise below 2 degrees. Ideally a 5% reduction in fossil fuel consumption each year starting from the end of this year. Any target less than this is committing future generations to serious climate change that will impact all parts of life, our economy and our environment. We must also do this for the interests of our Pacific neighbours who are losing their homelands to sea level rise.

How will our contribution affect New Zealanders?

3. What level of cost is appropriate for New Zealand to reduce it’s greenhouse gas emissions? For example, what would be a reasonable reduction in annual household consumption?
The cost to increase our target from 5% to a 40% reduction is small (less that $600 pa per household) and should not be an obstacle to the Government committing NZ to a more ambitious target. This is probably smaller than the tax cuts the government is hinting at in the next few years! We need to show leadership. 5% is not leadership. A 40% reduction is the bare minimum to say we are doing our fair share. We also need to quantify the benefits of taking action (how much will be saved by improving health and not being subject to the impacts of Climate Change and sea level rise etc)

4. Of the opportunities for New Zealand to reduce its emissions (as outlined on page 15 of the discussion document), which do you think are the most likely to occur, or be most important for New Zealand?
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Our existing renewable electricity portfolio is our biggest opportunity, not an excuse for inaction. By building on this we can be a positive example to other countries, pioneer solutions the rest of the world needs, and capture new economic opportunities. We should commit to a 100% target for renewable electricity generation by 2025. A transition to a low-carbon economy will also be good for New Zealand’s energy security and trade balance. 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.

Summary

5. How should New Zealand take into account the future uncertainties of technologies and costs when setting its target?
We cannot wait for a technological 'silver bullet' to all our problems. We need to start addressing them now and this may mean making sacrifices and not permitting the expansion of dairy farming or other land uses that will increase greenhouse gas emissions. There are many areas that are currently not being addressed by the Government which appears to be more interested in building more highways and encouraging fossil fuel companies to come set up in New Zealand. We should be encouraging more use of public transport, shifting freight to rail and ships, having 100% renewable electricity generation, expanding the availability of biofuel, increasing the uptake of electric vehicles, discouraging the consumption of coal, setting minimum insulation standards in all houses etc.

Other comments

6. Is there any further information you wish the Government to consider? Please explain.
Please take this issues seriously. I am only 22 and my peers and I will have to live with the consequences of climate change. My generation and those after me are already obligated to live in a world with at least 2 degrees of warming that is going to create a highly uncertain future. We will critically judge the actions of the Governments of today for the world they create for us tomorrow. Please be part of the solution not the problem. We cannot afford any more inaction.

Can the results of the consultation please be made public in addition to mention of how the submissions are going to inform the Governments target. Finally, please do not post my surname on the Ministry for the Environment’s website when publishing submissions. Thank you for taking the time to read this!