

Nina Atkinson:

Submission on NZ's post-2020 climate change target.

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Who am I

My name is Nina, I am a twenty-three year old living and working in Wellington. Thank you for the opportunity to submit on this issue. I became very concerned about climate change while studying environmental studies at Victoria University and I would like to make a submission in favour of an ambitious target and plan to address climate change in New Zealand.

I am a volunteer coordinator with Generation Zero and I do this work because I believe that young people are willing and able to be a part of the solution to climate change in New Zealand and I want to help them put that into action. Through volunteering I have met thousands of New Zealanders trying to live low-carbon lifestyles and trying to support political solutions - people who want to help New Zealand do the right thing on climate change. I would like to see the Government taking advantage of this enthusiasm and leading the country in ambitious emissions reductions.

I want to see political parties work together

I have been told plenty of times that climate change is the “challenge of my generation”. I worry a lot about what 4 degrees warming would mean for humankind and the world I live into. This is an issue that is far too important to allow party politics to get in the way of action. I would like to see NZ's political parties working together to address this issue.

NZers support action on climate change

A recent survey showed that a majority of New Zealanders are concerned about climate change and are taking some household emission-reduction actions. (Motu paper [“From Fact to Act: New Zealanders' Beliefs and Actions on Climate Change”](#)). I think the Government should take ambitious action that can amplify individuals' attempts to reduce emissions. Many people are trying to make a difference or wanting to do things differently but find it hard. The Government has the ability to make it easy for NZers to do the right thing, by doing things like investing in public and active transport. More and more people are wanting to try things like cycling ([Cycling Demand Analysis](#), Wellington City Council), for which the infrastructure is pretty cheap, and this could have a big impact on our transport emissions.

I want ambition and moral leadership

Action on climate change is not merely a governance decision for NZ. It is a moral decision - whether we want to do our best by our Pacific neighbours, the rest of humanity, and future generations. I want to be proud to be part of a country that stood up tall in the face of this moral question and did the right thing. Right now we're doing our best to escape doing anything and to me this not an "appropriate" decision for NZ - this is a decision to continue to be part of the problem that will cause massive global upheaval and suffering. I would like to see action on climate change acknowledged as a moral concern for our country.

Don't pass the cost on to future generations

I am asking the Government to choose an ambitious target and create a solid plan to achieve it because if they don't, younger generations will have to both pick up the slack and deal with the consequences of inaction. Failing to act now does it mean the problem goes away, it just means someone else has to deal with it.

Investigate options that are cheap or have net economic benefit

The discussion document and research accompanying this consultation failed to present the full range of options available to New Zealand. Yes, it is difficult to reduce agricultural emissions, and yes, perhaps it is harder to reduce emissions from electricity production when a lot of it is already from renewable sources. However both these points ignore the potential for easy emissions reductions in sectors such as transport, heating and industry. Investing in infrastructure that makes it easy for Kiwis to get out of their cars and instead use public or active transport, for example, is an area where a relatively small investment from the government could have massive benefits for emissions reductions, health, congestion and many other issues. I would like to see a much investigation into some of the cheap options that we do have to reduce emissions, and an acknowledgement that these actions can save costs in other areas. (I think the Urban Cycling Fund is a great step in this direction by the way).

Small is beautiful

I acknowledge that NZ does not play a huge role in global emissions. However I would like to see NZ make use of its small size and unique position rather than using it as an excuse for inaction. We have great renewable resources and we're a relatively well-off country - both factors which should allow us to lead the way in showing the world just how easy it is to move off fossil fuels. Let's make the most of our position and use it to do good.

An ambitious target

I think we should set an emissions reduction target of at least a 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2030. I believe the analysis accompanying this consultation (which suggests what the estimated costs to households of a 40% target would be) to be flawed as it has a baseline scenario of no country taking action on climate change, a scenario you and I both know to be incredibly unlikely and already untrue. As mentioned above the potential cheap or net benefit options are not well explored. While I think NZers are willing to accept very slightly less

growth for the sake of a safe climate future, I also think there are more ways to cheaply reduce emissions that this consultation does not properly deal with.

In line with the global goal of keeping warming with 2 degrees, I also think we should be planning for an eventual target of zero carbon emissions in the second half of this century.

A climate change law

I would like NZ to have a climate change law such as the UK Climate Change Act (as laid out in Generation Zero's report "[The Big Ask](#)") to provide accountability to the government and depoliticise the issue. The creation of a climate commission would help give NZers access to independent information.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit, please give me the chance to have a safe future and be a proud New Zealander again.