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Many thanks for the opportunity to comment on New Zealand's Climate Change Target.

I would urge this Government to set itself ambitious targets to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions, and to stop hiding behind the argument that "we are only a little country and our greenhouse gas emissions are only small on a global scale." We are a developed country with big emissions on a per capita basis, and we need to take responsibility for that and show some leadership on the world stage. As the discussion document states: "New Zealand's annual greenhouse gas emissions per person are around 17 tonnes compared to the global average of around 8 tonnes. This reflects the fact that we are a developed (and relatively wealthy) country, and have one of the highest agricultural emissions per person in the world." These are not figures to be proud of.

The discussion document goes into some detail about the economic costs of various greenhouse gas emission reduction, but what it fails to do is calculate the economic costs of 'doing nothing' – and these will be large. I also note that there are also many opportunities for economic growth that will come from developing a low carbon economy – and if we support research and development into a low carbon economy we should be able to make money by selling our knowledge and products to the world i.e. we would be investing in our future. The document scaremongers by asking: "What level of cost is appropriate for New Zealand to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions? For example, what would be a reasonable reduction in annual household consumption?" But it doesn't suggest what the cost to each household will be if we do nothing and then have to pay for the cost of dealing with the consequences of that inaction.

I want New Zealand to call for a global zero carbon target, and commit to a pathway towards zero CO2 emissions by 2050 or earlier (alongside reductions in other greenhouse gases).

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

We pat ourselves on the back for having a high degree of renewable electricity generation without stopping to reflect that we've used up all the easy renewable options. Yet as a nation we should be investing heavily in wind and solar to future proof our energy supply. Ideally this growth will come from individual and community installations, but instead we have an electricity sector that has been privatised and has as its priority profit, rather than a mandate to incentivise private investment in renewables.

The discussion document states that "Since 1990, New Zealand's total greenhouse gas emissions have grown by about 21 per cent ..." and goes on to say that despite this New Zealand "is on track to meet its current 2020 target through a mix of reducing domestic emissions, use of forestry sinks, and recognising a surplus of emission reduction units from our first target under the Kyoto Protocol." Yet

elsewhere it states that “New forests planted since 1990 have played a key role in offsetting some of our emissions given that growing forests absorb carbon dioxide and therefore can be used to offset or cancel out other emissions. In the next 15 years much of this forest is expected to be harvested as part of normal forest management practice, meaning that these forests will no longer provide a significant carbon sink over this period.” This is just clever accounting to make us look better than we really have been: forestry credits are only ever a temporary accounting benefit, given the 25 year time frame of our production forests. And I’m not even sure what clever sleight of hand is implied in the surplus of emission reduction units – I suspect this just means we’ve been complacent because we did a little better early on than we thought we would. That is not good enough.

Yours sincerely

Alison Ballance