

Personal Details Not For Publication

May 2015 (close Wed 3rd June).

Climate Change Contribution Consultation
Ministry for the Environment
PO Box 10362
Wellington 6143

Dear Ministry for the Environment,

Climate Change Contribution Consultation

This discussion document states:

Your submission may address any aspect of the discussion document, but we would appreciate you paying particular attention to the questions posed throughout and listed in this form. You may answer some or all of the questions. To ensure your point of view is clearly understood, you should explain your rationale and provide supporting evidence where appropriate.

I consider it necessary to contribute to this important topic. I have added comments below each of the questions, and state that it would have been good for more time to read & research in preparation. The content viewed is listed under the References heading. In these, there is much more I would like to have covered, but going more in-depth required more time (Quite symbolic really, in that the value of time is expressed here).

The main emphasis of this submission is on the 'Merchants of Doubt' concept that I regard as important for the Ministry, the people you advise, and the wider New Zealand public to appreciate. Also, as professionals advising the government, you are the authorities on this topic, and it is their responsibility to listen and set reality-based policy in relation to your advice.

If you seek clarification on any part of this submission, please contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Shaun Cavanagh.

1. Objectives:

It is seen as a fair and ambitious contribution – both by international and domestic audiences.

Costs and impacts on society are managed appropriately.

It must guide New Zealand over the long term in the global transition to a low emissions world.

- 1a. I agree with these objectives for New Zealand's contribution (and suggest the following additions..)
- 1b. What is most important to you?

That New Zealand's stance on global warming/climate change is reality-based, and in proportion to the real threat this issue poses, and not diluted by vested interests. This means that the New Zealand government listens to evidence-based authority in forming our contribution to the Paris conference, and is not swayed by viewpoints that seek to delay required action.

I think it is important that grass-roots New Zealanders appreciate the influence of vested interests in shaping policy on this issue. As noted by the researcher and author Naomi Oreskes, the term 'Climate Change' was advocated by a political strategist in 2006 in preference to 'Global Warming' on the basis that public appreciation of the latter would lead greater numbers to call for action ("Climate Change is a lot less frightening than Global Warming", he said). This would undermine the commercial benefits these interests have in maintaining the status quo.

The primary theme expressed in this submission is one of advocacy for greater awareness by the Ministry of this strategy, and allowing the content of her work to inform the policy stance that New Zealand takes to the Paris Conference in December. I would like to see the Ministry play a role in assisting members of the public to accept what authority this legitimate researcher over the stance of vested interests whose Climate denial is based on commercial interests.

The following comparison can be made:

The New Zealand Ministry of Health (2014) report to the Health Select Committee after public submissions on cigarette plain packaging covers two opposing viewpoints on what policy stance the government should take on this matter:

The fact that Australia is currently facing legal action by five countries at the WTO and also by a multinational tobacco company under its bilateral investment agreement with Hong Kong was seen by the tobacco industry and some business interests as a reason for caution. (These submitters were generally supportive of the Government's concern over the costs of defending potential litigation, and its position that decisions on when to

enact the legislation or when the regulations should come into force will therefore need to take account of the progress of legal proceedings against Australia at the WTO.)

However, most other submitters dismissed the trade law challenges as being ‘delaying tactics’ by the tobacco industry. These submitters stressed the importance of implementing plain packaging as soon as possible, and that there was no need to wait until eventual resolution of disputes being faced by Australia as the public health justification was paramount. Some also presented a counter argument that proceeding as soon as possible would in fact lower the overall litigation risks under current and future trade and investment agreements.

If there is an acknowledgement of the harm done by tobacco (the notion of ‘informed choice’), with implications for the New Zealand public, why should a sovereign government have to delay enactment of their own self-determined policy to address this harm, without having to defer to the interests of parties who stand to commercially gain from maintenance of existing conditions?

The comparison with the Global Warming issue is one of delay through manipulation of public opinion, despite a general acceptance the problem exists, and needs to be addressed.

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?

The central point with this question is accepting what the science says is happening to the world right now. As Oreskes states: The debate on anthropocentric climate change is closed, and numerous documented examples of evidence have existed prior to 2006. She notes development of the science of global warming as early as the mid-1960’s during the Eisenhower Presidency.

There is an expression: “Hard now, easy later. Easy now, Hard later”. In the Dunedin Public Meeting on 21 May, a significant majority of people agreed that New Zealand should reduce emissions by a minimum 40% by 2030. This will ensure New Zealand will preserve true value of our way of life, economy and environment. The alternative scenario must be accounted for: what are the threats posed by a minimal approach that does not address this issue?

One recommendation: a staged approach of 5% per year each year leading up to 2030 (see McKinlay article).

The Ted Talk given by David Puttnam (2014) makes several points this submission could mention, including the observation that the economic environment tends to disregard human

suffering in pursuit of profit. He also states that to deal with a problem, we must first acknowledge that it exists.

A fair contribution for New Zealand would be to make a pledge to reduce emissions across the board: Industry (6%); Transport (17%); Energy (22%); Waste (6%); and Agriculture (48%) (Discussion Document, p. 9). This is akin to what the major economies have pledged, and provides a focus for efforts to address a real problem that calls for a unified approach.

How will our contribution affect New Zealanders?

3. What level of cost is appropriate for New Zealand to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions?
4. Of the opportunities for New Zealand to reduce its emissions which do you think are the most likely to occur, or be most important for New Zealand?

3 If action is taken early, this will 'soften the blow', and make it easier for industries affected by a focus on reduced emissions to adapt to a policy with this focus. A logical question to ask in response is: If we acknowledge the potential threat posed by global warming (the concept of 'informed choice'), what are the costs of not acting in proportion to the threat posed?

- 4 One of the immediate reflections upon attending the meeting was that New Zealand will require a variety of employment resources with a specific focus on addressing greenhouse gas emissions. This submission suggests a government initiative to attract workers to a range of roles with this focus. Part of this initiative could be a website established to inform potential workers of roles within the climate sector (as distinct from traditional jobs). One of the important points to make is that potential workers are not aware of potential available roles, and will require information about who to approach.

Summary

- 5 How should New Zealand take into account the future uncertainties of technologies and costs when setting its target?

Even though New Zealand's greenhouse gas emissions are small relative to the rest of the world, it's been noted that as a wealthy developed nation, New Zealand carries a disproportionate responsibility for accumulated carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. We are among the largest emitters per head of population, with emissions having grown 21% since 1990 (Otago Daily Times).

New Zealand must account for its role in developing new technologies and responsibilities for setting example to other nations to address Global Warming, despite our size.

Other comments

- 6 Is there any further information you wish the Government to consider? Please explain.
- Green jobs, workforce. Need for government to take the initiative and inform potential workers of opportunities to work in roles focussed on reducing emissions.
 - John Muir (1838-1914): “When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe”. He expresses the connection between individuals, and how decisions made on such an issue impact on others. The theme is one of mutual dependence.
 - The Ministry’s role as government advisers. Government’s role is to listen, and form policy that reflects this evidence-based advice from Ministry officials.
 - The importance of time, and acting now in preference to delay.
 - Literacy of general population/awareness. The document *New Zealand’s Climate Change Target* was published in May 2015, and public submissions close on the evening of 3 June.

The Dunedin meeting was held on 21 May – leaving less than two weeks for people to prepare a submission. This time period is way too short for such an important topic, and this salient point from the Dunedin meeting is endorsed here. The majority of attendees at public meetings would only have been made aware the submission process was occurring via the meeting.

- New Zealand’s role as world leaders, despite our size (the argument our greenhouse gas emissions are insignificant in relation to rest of world is irrelevant).
- Trans Pacific Partnership – it is vital that the threat posed by this agreement to the environment is acknowledged (especially in relation to Global Warming).
- The relationship between personal responsibility and self-interest. The economy depends upon the environment for its survival, and sustainable economic activity that acknowledges this reality must be encouraged and promoted. Activity that harms the environment to the detriment of local communities must be discouraged.
- Merchants of Doubt – is not just a book, but is now made into a movie. The content needs to be appreciated by everyday citizens and policy-makers to understand. This submission endorses Ministry support for using this content to raise awareness amongst the New Zealand population of the Global warming issue.

References

Dunedin City Council (1 July, 2014) Seminar - The latest climate change science: what does it mean for decision-makers in New Zealand?

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<http://www.odt.co.nz/news/dunedin/343136/climate-change-target-moral-not-economic-question> (Accessed 23/5/15)

Ministry of Health NZ (18 June 2014) Departmental Report: Smoke-Free Environments (Tobacco Plain Packaging) Amendment Bill

http://www.parliament.nz/resource/emnz/50SCHE_ADV_00DBHOH_BILL12969_1_A399457/12299d5de76c22d415d07e8def9ac66da02fe0b5 (Accessed 1/6/15)

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<http://sonyclassics.com/merchantsofdoubt/> (Accessed 3/6/15)

(Producer: Robert Kenner)

Ministry for the Environment (May 2015) New Zealand's Climate Change Target
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Tedx Talks (1 December 2014) The reality of climate change | David Puttnam | TEDxDublin

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SBjtO-0tbKU> (Accessed 23/5/15)

The Monthly Video (2 May 2013) Merchants of Doubt. Naomi Oreskes

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8w-Nw8PCZuc> (Accessed 23/5/15)

Yale Climate Forum (25 February 2015) Merchants of Doubt: What Climate Deniers Learned from Big Tobacco <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cJIW5yVkw> (Accessed 23/5/15)