

Your submission to Zero Carbon Bill

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Submitter Type: Individual

Clause

1. What process should the Government use to set a new emissions reduction target in legislation?

Position

The Government sets a goal to reach net zero emissions by the second half of the century and the Climate Change Commission advises on the specific target for the Government to set later

Notes

There must be a net zero target early in the second half century and a meaningful net negative emissions target soon after.

Clause

2. If the Government sets a 2050 target now, which is the best target for New Zealand?

Position

Net Zero Emissions - Net zero emissions across all greenhouse gases by 2050

Notes

Clause

3. How should New Zealand meet its targets?

Position

Domestic emissions reductions only (including from new forest planting)

Notes

This will be the obvious way to go unless one makes the assumption that other countries will not honour their Paris commitments.

Clause

4. Should the Zero Carbon Bill allow the 2050 target to be revised if circumstances change?

Position

No

Notes

But here should be scope to bring it forward if conditions permit it.

Clause

5. The Government proposes that three emissions budgets of five years each (i.e. covering the next 15 years) be in place at any given time. Do you agree with this proposal?

Position

Yes

Notes

Clause

6. Should the Government be able to alter the last emissions budget (i.e. furthest into the future)?

Position

No - emissions budgets should not be able to be changed

Notes

Clause

7. Should the Government have the ability to review and adjust the second emissions budget within a specific range under exceptional circumstances? See p36 Our Climate Your Say

Position

Yes

Notes

But there has to be some way of ensuring that exceptional really does mean exceptional, not just that it's a bit harder than expected.

Clause

8. Do you agree with the considerations we propose that the Government and the Climate Change Commission take into account

when advising on and setting budgets? See p44 Our Climate Your Say

Position

No

Notes

The balancing of costs of climate change mitigation between current and future generations needs to be taken into account. This is the essential ethical issue; smaller sacrifices now versus large ones later. Any analysis that ignores the moral dimension will favour the present at the expense of the future.

Clause

9. Should the Zero Carbon Bill require Governments to set out plans within a certain timeframe to achieve the emissions budgets?

Position

Yes

Notes

Clause

10. What are the most important issues for the Government to consider in setting plans to meet budgets? For example, who do we need to work with, what else needs to be considered?

Notes

The mitigation of climate change is a world wide issue. New Zealand must not think it can set plans independent of what the whole world is doing. Whilst it will be feasible to reach zero emissions in NZ without too much disruption to society this is not the case for most other countries. There have to be serious doubts that NZ can depend on continuing supplies of all sorts of goods that are "high emission" in their production. How are densely populated industrial nations going to get to net zero emissions without deep cuts in the emissions they currently use to produce industrial goods for export?

Clause

11. The Government has proposed that the Climate Change Commission advises on and monitors New Zealand's progress towards its goals. Do you agree with these functions? See p42 Our Climate Your Say

Position

Yes

Notes

Clause

12. What role do you think the Climate Change Commission should have in relation to the New Zealand Emissions Trading Scheme (NZ ETS)?

Position

Advising the Government on policy settings in the NZ ETS

Notes

Clause

13. The Government has proposed that Climate Change Commissioners need to have a range of essential and desirable expertise. Do you agree with the proposed expertise? See p45 Our Climate Your Say

Position

Yes

Notes

Provided that the expertise in climate change policy extends to understanding what the world is doing and making sure NZ actions are realistic in view of these outside influences.

Clause

14. Do you think the Zero Carbon Bill should cover adapting to climate change?

Position

No

Notes

Adaptation is a separate area to mitigation and mixing the two will be ineffective. That does not mean that adaptation is not important, just that it needs to be addressed separately.

Clause

15. The Government has proposed a number of new functions to help us adapt to climate change. Do you agree with the proposed functions? See p47 Our Climate Your Say

Position

Yes

Notes

But in a separate climate adaptation body not in the climate change commission.

Clause

16. Should we explore setting up a targeted adaptation reporting power that could see some organisations share information on their exposure to climate change risks?

Position

Yes

Notes**Clause**

Do you have any other comments you'd like to make?

Notes

New Zealand needs to act on climate change mitigation on the assumption that the countries of the world will achieve their Paris commitments. This is essential if we are to avoid setting plans that are unrealistic in relation to what the rest of the world is doing. NZ can continue to emit reasonably large amounts of green house gases for a lengthy period of time because of the scope to plant large areas of trees as offsets. Very few other countries are in this happy situation so will in fact have to reduce their gross emissions very dramatically to achieve net zero emissions. As a simple example NZ could achieve net zero by reducing gross emissions from the present 18/19 tonnes per capita to, say, 10 tonnes and offset the remaining 10 tonnes for many years. China currently emits 5 tonnes per capita but has no chance of offsetting more than a tonne or two per capita even in the short term. Most countries are much closer to the China example than the NZ example so NZ must plan to fit into a world that is much more constrained in its ability to produce the goods that NZ currently imports or plans to import in the future. It is all well and good to plan on replacing ICE private vehicles with EV private vehicles as part of our plan but where are we going to import them from if other countries have higher priorities (feeding, clothing, housing, heating and transporting their citizens) than producing goods to export to NZ? Although plans that take account of these issues will be more disruptive of NZ society, they will be manageable provided we are doing the planning rather than suddenly discovering that the rest of the world is pursuing actions that make our too self-centred plans ineffective. The essential barrier to taking effective action to reduce NZ's emissions is the reluctance of the current generation to decide on and then make the sacrifices of elements of their high consumption way of life regardless of how much this refusal will damage the lives of future generations. Understanding this strong psychological commitment to a way of life that is unsustainable in anything except the very short term must be the starting point for any planning of mitigation action. Accepting the fundamental importance of the psychology in making changes must be taken on board yet this discussion ignores it completely. The ethical need for the current generation to take account of the enormous damage being done to future generations is overwhelmed by our commitment to the high consumption life style even though this often requires people to hold mutually inconsistent beliefs.