

Your submission to Zero Carbon Bill

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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

Either of these two options would focus the country on the problem the world is facing and start NZ towards a solution

Clause

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

Position

Net Zero Carbon Dioxide - Reducing net carbon dioxide emissions to zero by 2050

Notes

The rise in carbon dioxide in the atmosphere has been caused by the escalating extraction and burning of fossil fuels over the last 150 years which has brought carbon back into the atmosphere that had lain locked up in the earth's crust for millions of years and that had allowed the climate to be more benign. The burning of coal, diesel, petrol, and gas by an ever increasing world population is an immense problem and will be difficult to solve both politically and financially. While short lived gases are a problem they have always been there and they are just that short term gases and most are the result of changing the composition of the carbon that is already circulating in the cycle and has been cycling for millenias. Fossil fuels alone are increasing the sum total of the carbon in the cycle. They are the problem to be fixed.

Clause

3. How should New Zealand meet its targets?

Position

Domestic emissions reductions only (including from new forest planting)

Notes

We should be able to reach the target ourselves without the help of other less favoured nations. We are exceptionally well placed and if we cannot achieve zero carbon in this country most other countries with larger and poorer populations will have no show of reaching zero carbon and we may as well not try and so go on enjoying our life style of burning fuel for convenience and pleasure until we stuff it all up for our descendants.

Clause

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

Position

Yes

Notes

The problem is a global one and if the nations cannot unite to fix it it will be unsolvable. New Zealand on our own being perfect alone will have little effect on the problem and so there needs to be a pragmatic approach if we are to succeed.

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

Probably a good idea

Clause

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

Position

Yes - each incoming Government should have the option to review the third budget in the sequence

Notes

We must be pragmatic but there must be guidelines so that a new government cannot welch on the deal just to gain popularity and

political power and then fry the world of the future. However unless the majority of the world buy into the problem it will fail and there is nothing little NewZealand can do about that. There needs to be ongoing reviewing.

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

See above comments

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

Notes

We have concerns that another complicated and stultifying beauracracity will arise out of this which will be full of overpaid officials intent on making life difficult for those doing the work which needs to get done.

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

Probably

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

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

Position

Yes

Notes

There are changing conditions now and they will continue and need to be addressed

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

Probably the right thing but there will be fish hooks as many things are competitive and giving information away can lead to business decline and failures in many instances

Clause

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

Notes

The methane problem of New Zealand livestock is a doubtful one as the carbon from the air grows plant material which the ruminant eats and it produces methane into the air as a heating gas. This methane will eventually return to carbon to grow more plants to go around again as has been happening for millenias. I can see the politics of envy are likely to make the control of methane a tempting step for a government to tackle as it will look good internationally and will have a minimal effect on the voter base until the declining overseas income from agriculture starts to hit the overall wealth of the population and the country's living standard deteriorates. New

Zealand has approximately 10 million cattle, of which 6 million are dairy and 4 million are beef. From the United Nations Food and Agriculture figures, the latest world farmed cattle and buffalo population is February 2012 and then there were 1622 million farmed in the world. New Zealand's farmed cattle share is 0.62% of the world's and our dairy is only 0.37% so we are not a very large contributor if methane is a problem. I heard the prime minister saying we are going to do the right thing because it is the right thing when referring to NZ agricultural emissions. Agriculture in most other countries is much poorer than ours. Approximately 75% of the cattle and buffalos are in developing countries and they are unlikely to follow our example as most peasant farmers must remain emitters in order for their families to survive. Their animals not only produce the family food and income but oxen are also often used to till the crops and dried cattle dung is often the only fuel that farmers have to cook their food with. Of the other 25% of world cattle farmed in the more wealthy nations many are heavily supported by taxpayer subsidies and so they also are unlikely to follow NZ's lead if we add costs to our cattle farmers. Any increase in costs to the farmers of the industrial world would likely lead to an increase in demand for subsidy support both in Europe and North America. That would be hard to sell to voting taxpayers of an electorate in a democracy. On top of that there are lots of other farmed ruminants. Sheep, goats and camels on farms outnumber farmed cattle and buffalos. They make up another 2000 millions and many of these are also in developing countries. Then of course there is the problem of how can we control the emissions from all the ruminants that are not farmed but are wandering free and gobbling plant material across the world from the giraffes and antelopes in Africa to the reindeer of Siberia. How and who is responsible for these emissions? At the same time no country is willing to put an emission tax on jet fuel and make the air travel industry pay for the damage they cause to the atmosphere. Jet travel is convenient for the wealthy of the planet and a luxury the poor can never aspire to. It is an indecent squandering of our carbon heritage to benefit the few but it is those same few that make the decisions who use air travel most and so therefore airlines are never likely to be held to account for the damage that jet travel has caused.