

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

Time is of the essence, but the best route is to have the Climate Commission to advise the policy process.

Clause

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

Position

Net Zero Long-Lived Gases and Stabilised Short-Lived Gases - Long-lived gases to net zero by 2050 while also stabilising short-lived gases

Notes

CO2 is the key gas as it has such a long lifetime. we must get CO2 concentrations at least stabilised if we are to have any hope of avoiding very serious changes in the climate, and multi-metre sea level rise. Recent research shows that short-lived gases such as methane can be stabilised, to stop growing their warming effect. This is sufficient in the short term (next 30 years) but the short-lived gases must come down eventually. It would be good to see policy that focuses most strongly on carbon dioxide, but has a reduction target for methane and other GHGs (notably nitrous oxide) as well.

Clause

3. How should New Zealand meet its targets?

Position

Domestic emissions reductions only (including from new forest planting)

Notes

We need real emissions reductions, in NZ. This is an opportunity to lead the world.

Clause

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

Position

Yes

Notes

There should be an option to strengthen the target(s), but not weaken them.

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

Yes, generally, provided there is also a hard target date for zero CO2 emissions.

Clause

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

Position

Yes - the third emissions budget should be able to be changed but only when the subsequent budget is set

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

If there were technological breakthroughs, or catastrophic extreme events, the government should have the flexibility to take action to tighten budgets.

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

Yes

Notes

Yes, generally, though the potential costs of inaction, or weak action, must be properly considered against short-term costs of action. Tax relief etc should be factored in for lower-income groups.

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

Climate change affects us all, and will seriously damage our way of life if we don't take decisive collective action, based on mutual understanding of the risks. The whole of our society should be informed and consulted, as far as is practicable.

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

The Commission should be the vehicle for advising government, and for monitoring progress, publicly. It should not have decision-making powers. However, there needs to be a mechanism to ensure governments respond appropriately and fully to Commission recommendations.

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

Broadly, but ensure high-quality climate science expertise. Someone with political science knowledge would also be an asset.

Clause

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

Position

Yes

Notes

Adaptation is critical, as we have already set in train significant changes. Coastal property owners, for instance, cannot be left hung out to dry when insurance companies stop covering their risk.

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**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

Sounds good. The more communication, and the more transparency around what's going on, the better.

Clause

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

Notes

I am excited by the setting up of the Commission, and the zero-carbon bill. Done well, we have the opportunity to make a real difference to the future of NZ and the world, in the face of the biggest challenge humanity has ever faced. I have just participated in the first Lead Author meeting for the 6th Assessment Report of the IPCC, and I am reminded strongly of the stakes, the level of commitment already at play, and the urgency of action.