Dear Minister,

I am making a submission in support of the proposed legally binding climate law. Decisive action has been blocked by interest groups and politicians for decades now. I urge you to pass a law that is fair, ambitious and consistent with the climate science and international frameworks by including all gases and all sectors. The legislation should establish the goal of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees. We should not settle for 2 degrees warming, that would lock in devastating impacts on Pacific Island states and cause significant extinctions. That is not acceptable. To give us the best possibility of achieving no more than 1.5 degrees warming by the end of the century, there must be rapid cuts in all greenhouse gases beginning now. I support a net-zero target of 2040 with the majority of cuts occurring over the next decade. I support all greenhouse gases being included in the law, consistent with international climate frameworks. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change makes it clear that methane reduction is critical to success in tackling climate change. It is politically and scientifically untenable for New Zealand’s climate law to exclude any gases from our biggest emitting sector - the agricultural sector. I support the establishment of a Climate Commission, whose role should be to devise binding budgets. The Climate Commission should have statutory teeth, otherwise it is merely an advisory group that governments could ignore. Climate budgets should be legally binding and set a bare-minimum ambition, which must be achieved or bettered by government within the prescribed timeframes. While budgets should be binding, policy recommendations from the Commission should be just that - recommendations. I support the ‘firewall’ principle, that New Zealand’s targets must be achieved by actual cuts in our own emissions, and not through the purchase of overseas carbon credits or an over-reliance on forests as carbon sinks. While consensus across political parties is good, any cross-party agreement should not be achieved at the cost of strong climate law. Climate change is the greatest challenge facing humanity. It would be wrong to have broad agreement on weak law, when what is urgently needed to address the problem is strong law. The world needs pathways to transformational change if we are to avoid catastrophic warming. This is the scale of the challenge. The science is clear: the only way we can succeed is with big ambition. New Zealand must be bold and pass strong law for the sake of our precious earth and future generations.

Yours sincerely,
Oliver Richards