

Your submission to Zero Carbon Bill

Reference no: 9283

Submitter Type: Individual

Clause

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

Notes

I think that the Government should set a goal to reduce emissions at some point in the future when major emitters are taking effective steps to reduce their emissions profile. I don't accept that a new target is desirable or necessary. New Zealand is responsible for a tiny proportion of global emissions and, because of the make up of its emissions profile and industries, any attempt to significantly reduce emissions runs the risk of causing undue damage to the country's economy. I do not think that this risk is warranted to "set an example" to the rest of the world. Until the "big three" emitters demonstrate their commitment to reducing emissions by concrete actions anything other minor emitters do is simply irrelevant.

Clause

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

Notes

See previous answer. New Zealand should not be hobbling its economic activity in this way.

Clause

3. How should New Zealand meet its targets?

Notes

By reducing domestic emissions where this will not have an adverse effect on economic activity, for example, where new technology or technological improvements result in lower emissions in the process of improving operating efficiency or as a by-product of new processes. For example, new petrol-powered motor cars produce much less carbon dioxide per kilometre of use than cars produced even a few years ago, thus reducing New Zealand's net emissions anyway.

Clause

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

Position

Yes

Notes

Most definitely. Climate change is a natural process that has always and will always occur. What this Bill is aimed at is the additional effect caused by human activity. I have seen no credible evidence that any of the predictions arising from any of the global warming or climate change models have actually come to pass. Thirty years ago climate scientists were warning that in thirty years time we would be experiencing a mini-ice age, now they are predicting the opposite. The Minister himself accepts that the economic modelling cannot be accurate over a 30-year time frame (page 29 of the Discussion Document) but seems oblivious of the fact that the same uncertainty must apply to any model where there is not a defined, proven and reproducible mathematical formula for predicting the effects of any particular action. The climate is an incredibly complex chaotic system that we do not understand at any level. It seems to be impossible to predict the weather, as opposed to climate, with any degree of accuracy over anything more than 24 hours. Nor can we predict the occurrence of effects of natural phenomena such as volcanic eruptions that will result in large quantities of carbon dioxide and other "greenhouse gases" being added to the atmosphere, together with the formation of gigantic ash clouds that will inevitably affect the weather patterns. Circumstances will inevitably change, other countries may or may not come good on their promises, unexpected factors or events may make it impossible for New Zealand to meet whatever targets are set and those targets must be flexible.

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, provided that all three can be altered according to circumstances, especially economic ones in New Zealand.

Clause

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

Notes

The Government should be able to alter all three budgets as and when necessary.

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

Notes

The Government should be able to alter all three budgets as and when necessary. In particular, if the economic situation in New Zealand deteriorates, whether or not this is due to the emissions reduction measures or if the reduction measures are shown to be having a disproportionate effect on vulnerable segments of NZ society.

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

Both sides of the scientific debate and knowledge about climate change must be taken into account as must technology but economic, fiscal and social factors must be paramount. If any proposed measures are likely to have an adverse effect on vulnerable segments of the NZ population then these measures must be ruled out.

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

The Zero Carbon Bill must require Governments to set out proposals within the first 12 months after an election.

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 most important issues for the Government to consider are the social, economic and fiscal implications of the plans. The Minister has accepted that additional benefits will be necessary to minimise the effects on certain sectors of the population. This is a critical part of the planning and by no means the easiest. The poorest members of society are likely to be hard hit and targeting financial help at them will be relatively easy. The difficult segments of society will be those who are on the cusp of any benefits or just above the thresholds as these are always the ones who suffer disproportionately as increases in income are often outweighed by reductions in benefit.

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

No

Notes

I believe that it is imperative that the Climate Change Commission has no executive powers whatsoever, its role must be purely advisory and another independent body must be charged with the monitoring. The Commission could SUGGEST what it believes to be appropriate levels and compositions for emissions budgets but the Government must decide. The Commission must seek independent scientific advice rather than being the source of such advice. Using this advice, the Commission could suggest the extent to which New Zealand should take account of any international emissions changes in setting domestic targets.

Clause

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

Notes

I do not think that the Commission should have any role in policy setting in relation to the ETS. I believe that the ETS needs a fundamental rethink and restructuring to ensure that it does not adversely affect any important sectors of the New Zealand economy. All decisions must be taken by Government after full consultation with interested parties, both industry and the public.

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

Notes

I do not think that a Commission of a manageable and sensible size can hope to encompass all of the necessary expertise within its members and it will be more appropriate for the Commission members to be experienced in policy decision-making and implementation in order that they will have a good appreciation of the challenges inherent in this. The first and most important characteristic that members of the Commission must have is open-mindedness. The second is the ability to recognise when it is

necessary to seek expert advice and scientific input. After that, essential expertise must include the social impacts of economic change and policy; awareness of the potential impacts on local government and the ability of local government to respond, with or without help from central government; risk management.

Clause

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

Position

No

Notes

A fundamental part of any government's responsibility must be to take account of the costs of adapting to changed circumstances, whether this be, for example, natural disasters such as earthquakes, coastal erosion as a natural process or the inevitable effects of having permitted housing to be built on a flood plain. It matters not what has caused these changes and it is futile to try and predict what changes are likely as the majority will be truly unpredictable.

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

Notes

As per the previous question, the Government must assist local communities to build resilience against any natural disaster not just "climate change". Sea level rise may or may not occur, severe weather events may or may not become more frequent, earthquakes may or may not happen, but planning should take place so that communities can be assured of support if they are affected by any unexpected event.

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?

Notes

I have no idea what this is supposed to mean. As climate change risks are just as un-quantifiable and unpredictable as natural disasters I do not see how this can possibly add anything useful to the mix.

Clause

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

Notes

The most important principle that medical doctors are taught is "Do no harm". I believe that this should be the over-riding principle for the Bill in relation to the New Zealand economy. New Zealand's contribution to global emissions is miniscule and hamstringing the country's economy in an attempt to make futile changes is, in my opinion, unforgivable. I do not wish my name or email address to be published on the Ministry for the Environment's website, in any release to the public under the Official Information Act or in any summary of submissions that the Ministry may publish.