Submission on proposed Zero Carbon Bill

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Overall Comment

This process of building the bill to create a strong framework of controlling our impact as human society on the climate is long over due and I applaud the government for starting the process.

Stopping climate change involves painful changes and people resist change when it causes pain. The areas of pain are often described as:

- Loss of Status
- Lack of Certainty
- Losing Autonomy and choice
- Losing my Connection to people I feel are important to me (my community)
- Lack of Fairness (David Rock’s SCARF model)

There will be pain for managing our affects on climate change and the key message that is needed in the bill is that pain now reduces pain later. Proactive change now reduces expensive reactive changes later. Cost now is cheaper than cost later.

The way New Zealand manages climate change as a society can benefit from understanding human behavioural science. For instance, looking at the SCARF model we can apply the five aspects to how the legislation can help behaviour change.

When New Zealand is seen as a world leader then this raises Status and this can out way the pain of loss. For instance, nuclear free legislation made New Zealand a leader and cost access to America for trade and for security. My personal observation of the people around me was the status of being a world leader was more important than the losses. I think the same approach is needed for New Zealand to be a world leader in climate change. Currently we are a world loser and have a very fearful mentality of not offending others or being undercut by others who don’t take on climate change action. Being nervous about climate change action is a lose lose situation as there are many countries out there happy to continually get short term gain and race to the bottom – for example the USA currently. And lack of strong action now leads to higher pain later

I am seeing people intellectually willing to change behaviour but reluctant as it is complex and they are not seeing others act around them (social pressure is shown to be the highest motivator of behavioural change). Legislation that is clear, transparent and long term allows people to have Certainty. They will be sure that they can act as the legislation is not going to go away of flip flop every government change. They can see that it applies to all including their neighbours and communities.

Giving Autonomy is harder as many choices people want now – like excluding livestock from emissions control are actually choices which will hurt the person acting by increasing future cost. So autonomy needs to come from being able to choose from a range of useful options but not from regressive ones.

Relatedness is a key to successful change as people need to see that their tribe, community and connections are all affected so change si happening to us all. Strong legislation is the best way to create this all together situation. It needs lots of work around the law to create the communities that are working together.
Fairness is a key and this is acknowledged in the discussion document as fairness to other New Zealanders. Actually, fairness also needs to be seen as fairness for those we have wronged by our enjoying a high carbon economy. Connecting this to relatedness the bill needs to address the climate fairness and mitigation and support for change for our Pacific neighbours.

The building in of proactive leadership to create willing behavioural change of our communities, business and region is an important addition to the bill.

Underlying the bill is a fear of us going too far – the option to review climate budgets often; if the climate commission gets too much power it will get disbanded; if we cut emissions fast other competitors will undercut us. The underlying assumption of this discussion document is fear. That is normal and common at present. This legislation is needed to give the leadership that takes us from short term fear of loss to consistent action now to reduce long term big pain. The legislation needs to have very strong leadership around change and be difficult to water down while being able to increase its strength as it needs.

2050 target

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

Pick one:

the Government sets a 2050 target in legislation now

Optional comment
My desire for a strong clear goal presupposes that the goal will be a strong and clear one not a weak one hedging bets as this will be extremely painful in the medium term

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

Pick one:

net zero emissions: Net zero emissions across all greenhouse gases by 2050.

Optional comment
Anything other then net zero carbon emissions is allowing for climate change to ramp up and removes the leadership role that is needed to make NZ a world leader and to improve the status of New Zealanders. Methane has a short time frame as well as a higher greenhouse effect. As such it is MORE important to work on hard as by changing it we change our climate affects faster.

How should New Zealand meet its targets?

Pick one:

domestic emissions reductions only (including from new forest planting)

Optional comment
This is difficult as the it is faster to use overseas credits but in reality, this reduces the leadership role of NZ and doesn’t increase the worlds options to manage
climate change. As such we need to manage our climate effects within our boundaries.

The other difficulty is that forestry is seen as a way out. In fact, current practices are creating unintended side effects such as loss of soil carbon by fast growing short rotation pines and loss of soil through large area clear felling. I am seeing this personally with the soil erosion in the Nelson/Tasman Region and particularly the road to my place in the Wangapeka catchment. Forestry as a carbon sequestration needs to improve the current practices of clear felling and soil exposure for it to be a workable option. Planting for long term cover such as manuka for honey or other natives for soil control are wonderful options.

Should the Zero Carbon Bill allow the 2050 target to be revised if circumstances change?
Pick one:
no.

Optional comment
There will be many outpourings of pain and fear around changing our behaviour and to counter that and allow people to process through the pain the goal cannot change. The only proviso being once we realise that the goal is achievable and we haven’t all been made paupers then we can make the goal more ambition.

Emissions budgets
The Government proposes that three emissions budgets of five years each (ie, covering the next 15 years) be in place at any given time. Do you agree with this proposal?
Pick one:
yes

Optional comment
This is important for certainty. The 3 year government cycle is not a good investment framework while 15 years is better. We really need to take a leaf out of the Iwi business approach and look out 50 years so 15 years is weak.

Should the Government be able to alter the last emissions budget (ie, furthest into the future)?
Pick one:
yes, the third emissions budget should be able to be changed, but only when the subsequent budget is set

Optional comment
As above I see the need for long term certainty and leadership is needed. I also recognise that we are learning and that we need to change as we learn. As such l
support modifying the third five year plan but only after the next plan is set. It also needs to state that the goal is continual reduction of greenhouse gases and the budget cannot change for short term needs.

Should the Government have the ability to review and adjust the second emissions budget within a specific range under exceptional circumstances?
Pick one: no.

Optional comment
There are always exceptional circumstances so allowing to change the 5 to 10 year environment is seriously weakening certainty

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?
Pick one: no.

Optional comment
The list of considerations are not of equal weighting as the short term is not as important as the long term. As such it needs prioritisation and additions

While it is obvious as driven by the bill title it is important to reinforce that the first consideration is
- To achieve a zero carbon economy and positive effect on stopping climate change

The list needs to have as a priority the medium-term time frame of focussing on results in 2050
- To take a long-term approach of considering affects three generations in the future

It is also important to add in the social change aspects of what is considered
- Knowledge and ability to change behaviour using social sciences

The prioritisation is done by numbering the list
1. To achieve a zero carbon economy and positive effect on stopping climate change
2. To take a long-term approach of considering affects three generations in the future
3. the government’s obligations under the Treaty of Waitangi
4. the three government objectives for climate change policy: sustainable economy, global and local leadership and creating a just and inclusive society
5. scientific knowledge about climate change
6. Knowledge and ability to change behaviour using social sciences technology relevant to climate change
7. Social circumstances and, in particular, the likely impact of the decision on fuel poverty
8. Economic circumstances and, in particular, the likely impact of the decision on the economy and the competitiveness of particular sectors of the economy
9. Fiscal circumstances and, in particular, the likely impact of the decision on taxation, public spending and public borrowing
10. Energy policy and, in particular, the likely impact of the decision on energy supplies and the carbon and energy intensity of the economy

**Government response**

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

Pick one:

- yes

**Optional comment**

I support the Zero Carbon Act having a strict time frame for setting out policy plans. This should be either 6 or 12 months after a budget has been set. It is important that governments of any persuasion is held to account.

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?

**Comment**

- Long term focus of three generations ahead
- Te Tiriti o te Waitangi/Treaty of Waitangi
- Climate Justice in the pacific
- Social change
- Reducing effect on the atmosphere and climate with the intention of leading international action for carbon zero world economy

The short-term pain and difficulties need to be clearly stated as low priority.

**Climate Change Commission**

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?

Pick one:

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

Pick one:

advising the Government on policy settings in the NZ ETS

Optional comment
The commission needs the ability to be independent and loud. I see them as best with Advisory and mechanisms to hold the government to account

Decision makers are the politicians and need to be accountable. They are not good at doing long term planning so need a lot of pressure to remind them what is important. So the commission needs the ability (in fact the requirement) to be focussed on the goal of zero carbon and to be clear when actions go against this or reduce effectiveness

Please add the commission can comment on opportunities not put before them – ie they have the ability to report on issues not directed to them and they can be proactive.

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?

Pick one:

Yes and...

Optional comment
The list of skills/expertise needed is useful including the useful but not necessary

Add in the ability for social change and behavioural change as a must have
Adapting to the impacts of climate change

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

Pick one:

yes

Optional comment

Success of climate change and zero carbon New Zealand and pacific are around behavioural change. The commission needs to be able to be involved in all aspects of climate change including social change and mitigation to climate change. Of course the commission needs to drive the need to consider 3 generations out. So when house owners on the coast that will be inundated scream to drown out the need for them to shift there is some one with authority to represent the long term approach to change.

The Government has proposed a number of new functions to help us adapt to climate change. Do you agree with the proposed functions?

Pick one:

yes
no.

Optional comment

I support the commission holding the government to account and driving proactive behavioural change. The government should be required to prepare a national climate risk assessment, and a national policy plan to address these risks. A monitoring and reporting framework is also important. A process of bringing communities and businesses on board is also needed.

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

Pick one:

yes

Optional comment

It is important that to achieve long term change that the wider community and business are involved and seen to be affected fairly.

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