

Subject: Submission on the Zero Carbon Bill

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Thank you for the opportunity to make an individual submission on the Zero Carbon Bill that is to be considered by the house. I wish to add my support to the proposal to set a target of zero carbon emissions by 2050 at the latest, and hopefully to achieve this well before then.

New Zealand has an almost unique position to be able to meet this target without undue stress on our people or our economy, but only if a commitment is made now, backed by real action to change our existing standards and habits. This requires leadership by a proactive government that understands and believes in the importance and urgency of the need. I believe that we have such a government now, and that it should set a 2050 target of net zero emissions in legislation to establish this as a benchmark.

With this target set New Zealand can regain some respect as an environmentally conscious and responsible country, and can continue to promote itself as a "pure" land - aspiring towards our claimed 100%. We can use this as leverage in trade negotiations and promotions, while enjoying the genuinely healthier environment that it will bring. We are blessed with energy options that can make this possible, if we choose to adopt and develop them rather than relying on the carbon based systems we have blindly adopted from less fortunate countries.

Although CO₂ is now well understood to be an important greenhouse gas, it is nevertheless just one of the emissions that must be included. All other greenhouse gases, including methane, must also be included in the net zero emissions goal for the target to be meaningful and effective. Clearly this requires a transition from our current farming practices which will require research and careful planning. This makes target setting all the more urgent, to guide the change and to allow time for the transition to be implemented without stress.

Therefore, I support the Government's proposal for there to be emissions budgets that set out the pathway over a 5-year period to kick-start the process of change. The Bill should also require future Governments to set out how they will achieve the emissions budgets, including the transition pathways required to achieve them.

Since research and planning are central to the successful, timely and stress-free transition the process should be lead by a panel of experts who can define a starting strategy, and then develop and refine the progress into the future. I support the proposed Climate Commission to advise the government on targets and policy planning. The Government should have to publicly explain any deviations from the Commission's advice. The Climate Commission should also act as an independent watchdog, publishing progress reports and highlighting problems.

As the transition progresses each new government should be required to develop a National Adaptation Plan that will set a clear direction and provide a solid basis for local government policy.

In addition to the urgent environmental pressure to make this transition to a net zero carbon emissions economy, New Zealand should also see this as an opportunity and a chance to move to a cleaner, healthier, happier society that helps to free us from the stranglehold of the imported hydrocarbon industries. We can develop our own energy sources and farming expertise, and export our produce and technology with pride and profit with a clean environment and a clear conscience.

Stephen Beuzenberg