

Your submission to Zero Carbon Bill

Reference no: 10151

Submitter Type: Individual

Clause

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

Position

The Government sets a 2050 target in legislation now

Notes

Having been involved in climate change policy since the mid 1990's I can tell you that the time for more consultation is over. We all know what needs to happen, just do it.

Clause

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

Position

Net Zero Emissions - Net zero emissions across all greenhouse gases by 2050

Notes

All sectors, all gases. No excuses. The economy is a subset of our society, and our society is a subset of the environment. The "economy" should not and cannot dictate our survival on this planet. This issue is far more fundamental than our current economic or fiscal performance.

Clause

3. How should New Zealand meet its targets?

Position

Domestic emissions reductions (including from new forest planting) and using some emissions reductions from overseas (international carbon units) that have strong environmental safeguards

Notes

Getting to zero will take some doing, and the agriculture sector has a huge challenge. They should therefore be given the opportunity to interact with global partners to meet this challenge, and the international trade of carbon units should be allowed for this reason.

Clause

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

Position

No

Notes

No. An Act of Parliament should be required to make any changes. The target needs to be clear, ambitious, and have wide parliamentary support if we are to finally take this matter in hand.

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. I had the privilege of being part of the core design team of the first NEECS (National Energy Efficiency and Conservation Strategy) in 2001, that also had targets set. While we found it difficult to know with any satisfactory level of accuracy what difference our actions would take over time, we knew that if we measured what we were doing, we could make improvements to our actions, and to the way we measured them. New Zealand has grown that model and now has a comprehensive National Energy Strategy, which has stabilised our energy sector, reduced uncertainties, and allowed more focussed management of risks. Providing the Climate Change Commission (CCC) an ongoing long term budget as proposed makes a huge difference to what actions are ultimately taken, what measurement methods are established, and who gets involved to drive change. The lack of certainty on what "on the ground" actions will be taken should not be reason to pause, but even more reason to get stuck in now.

Clause

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

Position

Yes - each incoming Government should have the option to review the third budget in the sequence

Notes

Ultimately the Government of today cannot tie the fiscal hands of a government voted in at the next election. While NZ does not yet have a constitution, this principle is an essential part of democracy, whether, in this case, we like it or not. The necessary challenge here is to ensure cross party support for the climate change budget.

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

See above.

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

I think it is worth including reference to the co-benefits of climate change action in CCC's considerations. For example planting large riparian strips of native forest along riverbeds and creating carbon forests can also improve water quality, reduce erosion etc.

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

Yes. While it may be politically unpalatable to have policy driven plans that could prove unsuccessful, and therefore provide ammunition for the opposition, it is absolutely essential that plans be set, and we grasp that nettle, as we did when constructing the first NEECS. We need to move to learning by doing, not learning by talking about it. It may be worth considering providing scope for CCC to assist in the establishment of plans, as MfE is not well placed to develop plans of a more operational nature (which is where EECA have historically been very adept).

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

While households emit, NZ businesses are the largest emitters, and businesses will ultimately be the ones to make the changes needed to reach the target. They have had many many years of engagement on climate change policy (I sat as Vector's representative on the technical advisory group to Government climate change policy in the early 2000's, and it was entirely made up of large corporate interests). The Climate Change Commission should obviously work with business, but understand its role as a Climate Change regulator, similar to that of the Commerce Commission. The methods used by the Commerce Commission in the regulation of monopoly businesses such as electricity and gas networks would be a useful model to examine for the Climate Change Commission, as ultimately they need to make decisions that businesses will not like, and that will result in wasteful legal consequences. Reducing that waste through borrowing from Commerce Commission practices would, in my view, be useful.

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

Yes but the Commission also needs to be able to effect change through regulation of businesses, and enforcement of those regulations. Otherwise we have not taken any meaningful steps forward.

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

The CCC does not need to be directly involved in the ETS, in terms of management or governance. The CCC should be involved in establishment of criteria for categories of trading units, for example how many NZU's does a hectare of native forest, or plantation pine generate over time. While these have been set at a high level by Kyoto and Paris Agreements, NZ should have the discretion to adjust those Units or criteria to meet a wider set of policies such as to improve water quality, reduce erosion etc.

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

Yes this seems like a satisfactory list.

Clause

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

Position

Yes

Notes

Yes absolutely. I cannot think why you would not.

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**Clause**

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

Notes

While this is an individual submission, I have five young children who support this submission, to the extent they understand what the issues are and what I have submitted here. It is for them (and their potential children) I write this as they will bear the brunt of our inaction.

You have elected to withhold your personal details from publication.