

Submission on the Zero Carbon Bill

Submitter;

Stephen Howard

I am a father and grandfather who is seriously concern to leave a viable world for my children and grandchildren to inherit.

The statement that climate change is bigger than politics is certainly valid, the very survival of many species and ecosystems seem to be at risk and politics only applies to Homo sapiens. It would be nice to think that all parties across the spectrum would work together and look beyond election cycles. But such thinking is not realistic. Parties that support capitalism especially in its rabid neoliberal form are not likely to respond to ideas of cross generational justice or class equality. They may easily respond to environmental questions in a survivalist devil take the hindmost way. Action yesterday, and coherent long-term planning are necessary but such central planning is in opposition to market capitalism.

It has been argued that the history of capitalist growth has been a history of increasing replacement of human and animal labour with fossil fuels alongside increasing population growth and a growth in consumption that is both alienating and unsustainable, so in order to address the problem of global warming we need to see through the veil of neoclassical economics which hides the foundations of the problem.

Getting to zero carbon by 2050 or sooner is possible and draw down would be even more advantageous. Doing this will require broad commitment of the people of Aotearoa in concert with the people of the world. The people/citizens of Aotearoa deserve to be well informed as to the science, risks and consequences. If the people of New Zealand are given accurate information on the science, models and implications for the future for our grandchildren, I would like to think the vast majority would support action.

A clear and stable path will help New Zealand people plan for our future and work towards drawdown carbon solutions.

Fairness

In addressing the question of fairness those who presently benefit the most from carbon emitting technology often consume for purposes of status signalling while those who are struggling to survive use less carbon emission for personal consumption or are excluded from efficient technology. Any policies to deal with climate change must take into account not only those whose work contribution is recognised, even if poorly, in their wages but also those whose work is not recognised in the market wages, eg mothers, care givers, volunteers and people who live in nonmarket societies.

Cost-effectiveness

At the moment we are doing little to mitigate the costs to future generations and even to some of the people who are living with climate change at this very moment. The present national accounts assessment of economic benefits needs to be reconsidered in looking at the costs of policy in regards to climate change solutions. To come to terms with cost benefit in the larger

picture a more accounting based national accounts could examine draw down of resources and damage to environment, leading to a spread sheet that resembles a company's financial statement but including resource draw down and human welfare.

Comprehensiveness

In tackling this problem in must be recognised that a strategy that encompasses all sectors, and drives coordinated decision-making and analysis across government is in opposition to the reality of the last 50 years of neoliberal capitalism. Comprehensive planning sounds like central planning. Accepting central planning would be revolutionary in Aotearoa after almost fifty years of failed neoliberalism.

Sustainability

Environmental change as a result of both climate change and other human encroaching on habitats etc. is now inevitable, our role now as a country and in deed a species is to manage the changes (a la Tim Flannery) towards the most sustainable possible outcomes.

Democracy and Human Rights

It's imperative that all actions, research, policies and debates are conducted in a human rights framework and in the open. People need information that is based on science not the short term commercial objectives of the privileged few. A considerable budget for communication to the people should be in place and it should be run by science professionals rather than "communication and design" workers.

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

I support a net zero and preferably a drawdown target by 2050 or earlier. The sooner the better. Any process used to set carbon emissions should be open, based the science, and consider deeply social and intergenerational justice.

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

Net zero emissions across all greenhouse gases by 2050 should be minimum target with net drawdown and earlier strategies preferred. Science should be used to set the balance in tactics between long term gases and shorter term one. One easily expressed argument against a vigorous attack on global warming gases is that it would threaten our agricultural exports and our tourism. But the need to act is more important than either of these.

3. How should New Zealand meet its targets?

The use of international trading in "carbon credits" is highly problematically.

Regulation charging at source or at the border and government investment are better options than an ETS whether domestic or international. Aotearoa should not export its responsibility to reduce carbon emissions. Net emissions reductions including using domestic forestry to balance emissions with draw down should be the major tactic but consideration of the emissions embodied in imports should also be covered

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

Targets for emissions should be very firm and only in the most extreme cases should emissions be allowed to be adjusted upwards. Downwards adjustments would be welcome if possible and necessary.

5. 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?

Five year budgets setting targets 10 to 15 years in advance would be satisfactory if legally binding and all information is completely available to the people.

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

Yes but only to decrease net carbon emissions/drawdown until it is clear that the problems of climate change are being globally and effectively addressed.

7. Should the Government have the ability to review and adjust the second emissions budget within a specific range under exceptional circumstances?

Budgets should be reviewed regularly be only modified to allow increased emissions in extreme conditions. Eg nuclear war could remove the need to be concerned. Downwards adjustments may be both necessary and allowable.

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.

In addressing the threat of climate change the government and the Climate Change Commission should start with a realisation that what is required is completely revolutionary and present economic and fiscal paradigms are not capable of addressing the situation.

Economic growth as a target must be rejected and economic adaptation to address the problem while maintaining social justice and equality must become the new paradigm. Pareto efficiency must be rejected. This is a revolutionary idea but must be accepted if a zero carbon strategy is to be achieved.

So considerations to be taken into account in setting budgets should be in order of priority

- scientific knowledge about climate change
- technology relevant to climate change
- energy policy and, in particular, the likely impact of the decision on energy supplies and the carbon and energy intensity of the economy
- social circumstances and, in particular, the likely impact of the decision on in equality and its effect on the poorest in society
- the government's obligations under the Treaty of Waitangi
- the three government objectives for climate change policy: sustainable economy, global and local leadership and creating a just and inclusive society
- economic circumstances and, in particular, the likely impact of the decision on the economy. Concern with competitiveness in our economy in the tradable sector is exaggerated. A focus on the domestic economy nullifies the need to worry about competitiveness. Economic globalisation is part of the problem

and reduces the ability of democratic governments to make decisions to address issues of climate change and social equality.

- fiscal circumstances and, in particular, the likely impact of the decision on taxation, public spending and public borrowing, against a framework of Modern Monetary Policy

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

Clear and strict time frames for both policy and action should be set. Time frames should be short ie six months, and should be clearly communicated to the people.

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?

First and foremost, the government needs to work with the people of New Zealand, tangata whenua and international partners especially members of the Pacific forum. Advice and assistance should be sought from sources with the most developed responses, from places where the effects are becoming most clearly experienced, and groups and people who are making innovative community based adaptations. Eg there is an EU and NZ funded scheme to replace expensive generators at schools in outlying Tongan Islands with solar power, thus making reliable power available for educational purpose while cutting emissions, expenses, and pollution. <http://www.canterbury.ac.nz/news/2011/uc-helps-power-tongan-schools.html>

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?

The commission should have three functions a) monitoring the government's and Aotearoa's progress in setting and meeting the climate budgets set, b) ensuring that the people of Aotearoa are well informed on both the science and the state's performance, and c) giving expert advice to government, advice which should be readily available to the people. But the government should be making decisions under the scrutiny of the people. In a democracy the government is accountable to the people. The commission's main focus should be on ensuring that the information is collected and reported to the people and government.

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

The whole ETS should be reconsidered. At the moment it amounts to the creation of an abstract and tradable property right; a right to trade in polluting. It is always an error to create yet another abstract property right. Regulation and charging at source /at the border are better solutions to the problem of ensuring markets price in the externalities they are presently ignoring.

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?

The range of skills the Commission should have

- climate and environmental science, including an understanding of what can be taken from the knowledge of people not necessarily in the science paradigm

- climate change policy (including emissions trading)
- resource economics and impacts (including social impacts, labour markets and distribution), but being very careful not to involve people on the Commission who hold a fundamentalist market approach.
- knowledge of the public and private innovation and technology development system
- experience with addressing adaptation challenges like planning and local government
- management of real world risks rather than just market risk
- Te Tiriti o Waitangi, te reo me ona tikanga Māori and Māori interests
- engineering and/or infrastructure
- community engagement and communications, being careful to recognise that accuracy and clear information are more important than design and presentation

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

Yes we have in all likelihood already locked in enough human caused warming to require considerable adaptation. The rich can always adapt easily but the vast bulk of the people will require serious support. One example is the way the Dutch have managed retreating from river flood plains, ensuring that those who have to make the move are supported and not left homeless. Brighton in Christchurch and South Dunedin are two areas where the residents will probably have to move, and will feel much more secure in doing so with state support.

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

Yes government should be hands on in the planning for both mitigation and adaptation and councils should be strengthened in doing likewise. The concept of subsidiarity as developed in the EU with decision being made as locally as possible should be considered

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?

Yes I support all sectors of government both central and local being required to assess local risk and report to their citizens/people.

In considering these questions it is worth considering the implications of the following and the implications and application to Aoteroa it may have;

“America’s 1 Percent emits 15 times more greenhouse gas emissions per person than the average American and fifty times more than the average person worldwide (World Resources Institute). The rich pollute the most and suffer the least from pollution.”

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/blog/buddhist-economics/201807/luxurious-lifestyles-are-hurting-us-and-the-earth>

And

The EU has been pushing carbon neutral heating systems for buildings, and starting in 2021 this will be the standard for all new construction

http://economics.com/how-changing-my-economic-model-made-me-a-climate-change-optimist/?utm_source=facebook&utm_campaign=paid