

Your submission to Zero Carbon Bill

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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

A target of net zero emissions should be legislated now. Ideally, this should be amended to be a target for 2040. This is based on evidence that net zero anthropogenic emissions should be obtained "well before 2040 in order to assure the attainability of a 1.5C target by 2100" (see: <https://www.independent.co.uk/environment/world-zero-carbon-emissions-before-2040-two-decades-climate-change-global-warming-greenhouse-gases-a7682001.html>, which also includes link to study). Legislation should be enacted now, to avoid delays that will only mean that emission reductions in the future will have to be more dramatic, and made in an even shorter timeframe- i.e. will be far more prone to negatively disrupting communities, health and social equity, and the economy. There has been far too much stalling in the past- we need to start the ball rolling on ambitious targets NOW.

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

The target should include ALL greenhouse gases. All gases have a negative impact on the environment. Short-lived gases are not exempt from this. For example, while methane is short-lived in the atmosphere (where it still does disproportionate damage), it stays in the ocean for hundreds of years, contributing to sea-level rise through thermal expansion (see : Zickfeld et al 2016 - 'Centuries of thermal sea-level rise due to anthropogenic emissions of short-lived greenhouse gases'). Acting strongly to reduce methane also offers us the chance to make quick, significant reductions to our overall total emissions. Reducing short-term gases such as methane (as well as black carbon) will also help to reduce air pollution which leads to poor health outcomes. Air pollution is also a big killer globally- the WHO estimates about 7million premature deaths each year can be attributed to air pollution. Committing to net zero emission across all GHGs also provides New Zealand an opportunity to become a world leader on climate change, and demonstrate on the world stage that a) strong but well-planned action is possible and desirable, and b) wealthy, high-emitting countries must recognise their disproportionate contribution to global emissions and act to support those developing and less-developed countries who have historically emitted far less, but will disproportionately experience the negative impacts of climate change (i.e., add credibility to the idea that climate change must be acted on quickly and comprehensively, and make sure New Zealand 'does its fair share').

Clause

3. How should New Zealand meet its targets?

Position

Domestic emissions reductions only (including from new forest planting)

Notes

The target should be met by domestic emission reductions only- to provide certainty to New Zealanders; to make sure we can experience the health co-benefit from emissions reductions (e.g. reduced air pollution, increased physical exercise from increased use of active transport...); and to avoid the price volatility of carbon credits on the international markets. The priority must be on reducing emissions (forestry off-setting alone cannot be the only solution- see the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment's recent comments on this in the report attached below (page 10, paragraph 1)- and means we don't get the health benefits of reduced carbon emissions) In terms of reforestation, a balance between permanent forestry planting and plantation forestry should be struck.

Clause

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

Position

No

Notes

Partially- It should only be able to be changed to allow for a more ambitious target to be reached (i.e. the target shouldn't be able to be increased)

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, this is important for transparency and providing certainty about how we aim to move forward- this in turn will be critical for New Zealanders and businesses to be able to undertake and plan their own action and adaptation.

Clause

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

Position

No - emissions budgets should not be able to be changed

Notes

Partially- It should only be able to be changed to allow for a more ambitious target to be reached.

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

No

Notes

Partially- It should only be able to be changed by changing the law itself, through normal parliamentary procedure.

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

Partially-the priority must be the scientific basis of climate change- i.e. what are the ecological tipping points that we cannot exceed? Then, working from this basis, the social, health and equity of impacts should be considered.

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. These plans must be made publically available, and should be required within a short timeframe following the Emissions Budgets being set (under 12 months)

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

-Health and social equity -the significant potential co-benefits of action for health, equity and wellness. -Obligations under the Treaty of Waitangi -sustainable economic opportunities

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

The Commission should also set the Emission's Budgets, based on the latest scientific knowledge. Monitoring will be a critical aspect of the Commission, to make sure the Government of the day is held accountable.

Clause

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

Position

Advising the Government on policy settings in the NZ ETS

Notes

The Commission should advise on ETS policy which will keep us within the Emissions Budgets.

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

However, it is essential that health and wellness expertise is also included- this felt like a glaring omission from the original discussion document. Expertise in equity is also a must across the Commission, to help ensure equity is kept at the heart of all responses, and that unintended negative consequences of climate policy are avoided.

Clause

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

Position

Yes

Notes

Yes, although the priority of the Commission should remain on mitigation (to avoid spreading itself to thinly; because strong mitigation efforts are needed to avoid catastrophic climate change in the future; and because the more mitigation we manage, the less adaption we'll need). This may mean that adaption is dealt with as a separate advisory work stream, within the Commission.

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

Yes, it is essential the Commission's functions include: -a national climate change risk assessment plan -a national climate change adaption plan -Regular monitoring and reporting of the progress towards implementing national adaption plans All of these should include factoring in the health sector.

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

Yes, reporting is critical for transparency and holding organisations accountable/keeping them on track. This reporting should be compulsory.

Clause

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

Notes

Thank you for being a Government who is finally displaying a genuine interest in acting decisively on climate change. Now it is absolutely that you do not allow the process to be derailed by vested interests, or by people who say it's "too ambitious" to legislate for net zero emissions of ALL greenhouse gases. Yes, it will be challenging, and yes, we need to be extremely careful to 'off-set' the regressive nature of the impacts that both climate change policy and climate change itself will have on vulnerable populations and certain sectors. However, supporters of net zero emissions of all GHGs are not calling for an ambitious target because we don't care that it means significant changes for the country (and especially for vulnerable communities; farmers; those currently employed by high-emitting industries etc)- it is because the evidence is overwhelming that we can't NOT be ambitious- time is running out to take action which a) can be well-planned to try and minimise shocks and b) avoids breaching critical ecological tipping points that will cause catastrophic climate change. Climate change is not waiting for us- if we don't act now, the impacts of climate change will not simply disappear- they will simply escalate. And those impacts will still disproportionately hurt those same vulnerable communities, farmers etc - except far more so. It's tough to get people on board with the 'sacrifice a little now to save a lot later' mentality, but we must push on- and again, find ways to minimise the negative impacts that will arise from taking action- this should be a critical focus of the Commission. We must also try to 'exploit' the numerous possible opportunities that climate action may have (technological developments, a return to a more holistic way of living that is sustainable for this Earth, health and equity co-benefits... etc). The Commission, too, should factor co-benefits of action into its considerations, and seek to give advice on which policies will most likely produce co-benefits and emission reductions at the same time. The Government, in 'selling' this Bill to the public, must try and be as positive and as hopeful as possible, without being naive or glossing over the very real fears people have and challenges we face. People firstly need their fears to be genuinely heard and listened to; then, they need hope, solutions, and a sense of self-efficacy (see: O'Neill and Nicholson-Cole, 2009 ' "Fear Won't Do It": Promoting Positive Engagement With Climate Change...'). I hope this is something that can be incorporated into the conversation that surrounds this process moving forward. Thank you for your time.

Supporting documents from your Submission

O_Niell__Nicholson-Cole_2009.pdf

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Zickfield_et_al_2016.pdf

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