

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 goal to reach net zero emissions by the second half of the century and the Climate Change Commission advises on the specific target for the Government to set later

Notes

RECOMMENDATION: The Global Warming and Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Bill (see my recommendation in the 'additional notes' section at the end of this submission) should set a goal of net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. That goal must be fixed and the Bill should prohibit it being changed (unless someone would like to suggest that we actually start trying to return to pre-industrial levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere). Otherwise, as 2050 approaches, it could be too easy to modify the goal if the adaptation had not been progressing as planned in relation to the emission budgets. The Climate Change Commission would advise Parliament and make recommendations about the interim 5-yearly annual greenhouse gas emission budgets.

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 answer depends upon the definition of the word 'best'. The best target for the New Zealand economy in the short term would be the first option, "Not specified". The best target for the environment which sustains life, including humans, would be the fourth option, "Net zero emissions across all greenhouse gases by 2050." RECOMMENDATION: The Bill should propose the fourth option, "Net zero emissions across all greenhouse gases by 2050." RECOMMENDATION: The language should always use the term "net zero greenhouse gas emissions".

Clause

3. How should New Zealand meet its targets?

Position

Domestic emissions reductions only (including from new forest planting)

Notes

RECOMMENDATION: The New Zealand ETS is susceptible to corruption. To help ensure that the ETS is not used 'inappropriately', Parliament must ensure that the New Zealand ETS be used only within New Zealand so that all aspects of its transactions can be regulated and monitored, and that no international carbon credits be purchased to offset greenhouse gas emissions in New Zealand.

Clause

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

Position

No

Notes

RECOMMENDATION: Global warming and climate change are reasonably well understood. It is extremely unlikely that circumstances will change for the better. If there's a change, it will probably be only for the worse. There are two circumstances in which the Bill should allow the target to be changed and only to make it more demanding: (1) reduce the levels of greenhouse gas emissions only if Parliament can agree that we should actually start trying to return to pre-industrial levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, or (2) that the target date of 2050 be brought closer. Easing the target by increasing the allowable amount of greenhouse gas emissions to be reduced or increasing the year of the target should be prohibited.

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

RECOMMENDATION: The 5-yearly budgets should be explicitly stated in annual increments so that our progress towards the target, or otherwise, can be regularly monitored and reported to Parliament on an annual basis.

Clause

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

Position

Yes - the third emissions budget should be able to be changed but only when the subsequent budget is set

Notes

RECOMMENDATION: No emissions budget should be able to be increased, only decreased.

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

Considering that 'exceptional circumstances' occur from time to time, and will continue to occur during and after the 'special period' of mitigation and adaptation, the existential threat of global warming and climate change demands that we not excuse ourselves for withdrawing in any way in our continuous efforts to mitigate and adapt to the consequences of global warming and climate change.

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

RECOMMENDATION: If reference is made to "our obligations under the Treaty of Waitangi", those obligations must be specifically and fully described, not left as a vague phrase with no definite meaning.

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

RECOMMENDATION: The Government should provide the New Zealand population with information about its intended policies, plans, and procedures to meet the emissions budgets with as much advance notice (warning) as possible. It should also devise ways for the changes to be absorbed by everyone in New Zealand as easily as possible with the least amount of disruption, to assist everyone to plan for and adjust to the intended changes. For example, it would be better to increase petrol prices starting immediately by 2 cents per litre per week (that is, an increase of 2 cents each successive week) than by stating that its intention would be to increase petrol prices by \$2 per litre in 2021.

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

The Government needs to consult with anyone who might have information about how best to meet the budgets, how best to schedule the changes required, and how best to engage the public so that they strive to meet the budget fairly, efficiently, and effectively within the necessary time frames.

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

RECOMMENDATION: Because it is critical that almost all if not all of New Zealand's population understand the threat of global warming and consequent climate change, understand the existential need and the means to constrain and reduce global warming, understand the effects and impacts that constraining and reducing global warming will have on our New Zealand society, and understand the critical need to maintain civil society and how to achieve that while undergoing all the required changes to our society and its cultures, the Commission should be instructed to establish and provide an aggressive educational program for all New Zealanders of all ages starting immediately upon its establishment. As well, the Commission should be authorised to establish various measures and means to statistically monitor the desired effects of its educational program. Recommendation: The Commission should have the following functions: (1) advise the Government about its 2050 emissions target, its 5-yearly annual emissions budgets, and means of mitigation and adaptation (2) establish measures and statistically monitor all emissions so that it can accurately report to the Government New Zealand's progress meeting the 2050 emissions target and 5-yearly annual emissions

budgets, (3) enforce with Parliamentary authorisation any mandatory emissions regulations, with the power of exacting fines from any individuals or organisations not complying with the regulations, and (4) educating the public about global warming and climate change in order to promote civil health and security.

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

RECOMMENDATION: Because the ETS should not be used to allow anyone or any organisation to permanently deflect their responsibility to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions, the Commission should be instructed to recommend to the Government 5-yearly emissions budgets to annually reduce the amount of emissions traded by the ETS with the intended target being to eliminate the ETS by at least 2040. As well, the Commission should be authorised to establish various measures and means to statistically monitor the desired decrease in the use of the ETS.

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

RECOMMENDATION: As well, because of the need for the Commission to educate the public, one or more of its members should have established educational credentials, expertise, and a history of experience in public education.

Clause

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

Position

Yes

Notes

RECOMMENDATION: Because neither the emission budgets nor the 2050 target will be met without the New Zealand society adapting its culture and economy during the intervening years, the Commission should be instructed to advise the Government about the optimal scheduling and means of achieving the adaptations needed to achieve the emission budgets and the 2050 target.

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

RECOMMENDATION: The Commission should be responsible for (1) coordinating all scientific and technical enquiry into the matter of global warming and climate change adaptation and advising the Government accordingly, (2) regular national climate change risk assessment reports, (3) a national adaptation plan, with a 2050 target and 5-yearly budgets, including the means to measure and monitor the implementation and progressive achievement of that plan, and (5) a national adaptation enforcement power (see question 16).

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

RECOMMENDATION: The Commission should be provided with the authority to establish regulations for individuals and organisations to report any or all data relevant to their emissions and appropriate to the national measurement of emissions, and the authority to enforce that reporting, including the power to fine individuals and organisations.

Clause

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

Notes

RECOMMENDATION: Because the proposed name of this bill, namely the Zero Carbon Act, does not clearly or fully describe the concern or the nature of this bill (firstly, nitrous oxide and water vapour are also greenhouse gases but do not contain carbon, and secondly, the intent is not to emit zero carbon in greenhouse gases, which would probably be not only impossible but actually lethal to all plant life and subsequently all life including human life if achieved), the bill should be renamed the Global Warming and Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Act. If that RECOMMENDATION is not acceptable, at least call it the "Net Zero Carbon Act".

RECOMMENDATION: Because of the existential threat of global warming and climate change, the New Zealand Parliament should

establish the Zero Carbon Act (or Net Zero Carbon Act, or preferably the Global Warming and Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Act) as 'entrenched' legislation requiring at least a 75% majority for amendment or repeal. As well, the Act should prohibit the amendment of the clause expressing the 2050 net zero greenhouse gas emissions target. The vote should be a conscience vote not subject to political party voting rules and procedures (whipping). This recommendation is intended to reduce significantly the effect of the three-year electoral term with its consequential yo-yoing of political party policy changes. RECOMMENDATION: The Zero Carbon Act (preferably named the Global Warming and Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Act), or "the Act", should contain clauses requiring all other subsequent legislation to comply with the Act so that, after it has become law, it will be one of the legal foundations of our society, like the electoral law and the human rights law. Accordingly, separate adaptation acts for various sectors of the economy could be enacted having legal subordination to the Act.