 Purpose of the proposed zero-carbon bill

The purpose of the proposed zero-carbon bill should be much more substantive than setting targets.

Had this bill been proposed 30 years ago when Dr James Hansen testified to a then-receptive United States Senate, a targets-based bill might have been entirely appropriate. In 2018, there is vanishing likelihood that we have the luxury or a further two decades before becoming zero-carbon.

https://www.nature.com/articles/s41561-018-0146-0

Name of proposed climate commission

Names are crucially important. If the purpose of an equivalent of the United Kingdom’s Committee on Climate Change is climate action, then the proposed climate commission should be titled: Climate-Action Commission

https://vecan.net/governors-climate-action-commission/

Deep review of emissions trading scheme

New Zealand’s emissions trading scheme is an abject failure. The proposed zero-carbon bill must allow for a deep review of the scheme and open-mindedly assess alternatives to it, including the straight fee-and-dividend mechanism consistently advocated by Dr James Hansen, or a carbon tax and climate-action quantitative easing approach possibly better suited the a less tax-averse country.


https://www.wsj.com/articles/green-quantitative-easing-1495173792

Science advisor to the climate-action commission

In the government’s 61-page discussion document Our Climate Your Say, the word science appears only 9 times.

For the proposed climate bill to be robust, an evidence-based approach is non-optional. In particular, the proposed climate commission must include a full time chief science advisor role.

The discussion document mentions electric vehicles six times, public transport four times. The Committee on Climate Change’s 2018 progress report to United Kingdom Parliament mentions public transport 13 times, culminating with: Public transport must be incentivised.

Professor Sir Peter Gluckman’s Methamphetamine Contamination in Residential Properties: Exposures, Risk Levels, and Interpretation of Standards is testimony the need for evidence-based policy-making. Likewise, a zero-carbon bill that panders to the popular notion that global warming can be prevented by painless switch to electric vehicles, and batteries photovoltaic panels is, as the former United Kingdom government’s Department of Energy and Climate Change chief scientific advisor, the late Professor David MacKay, in his last-ever interview, an “appalling delusion.”


https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/may/03/idea-of-renewables-powering-uk-is-an-appalling-delusion-david-mackay

Imperative for holistic approach to climate action

Because humanity has painted itself into a corner with its greenhouse gas emissions, climate action must be addressed with every policy decision addressing urgent issues in every other theatre.

An example is the global epidemic of noncommunicable diseases. It has been found that if all of the interventions tried, such as incentivising healthier lifestyles, public transport, and only public transport, makes a significant, positive impact.

The holistic approach, then, is the most cost-effective route to meaningful climate action.


Climate-action-commission summary for policymakers

The rapidity with which anthropogenic global warming is occurring is unprecedented, potentially, in the last 100 million years. But the science quantifying this rate is also rapidly evolving, and major new revelations are occurring rapidly, sometimes several in a one-month period.

The well-intentioned Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change process has proved to be incapable of providing timely information for policy makers. Worse, and anecdotally, the summaries that are produced are subject to political censorship by up to 195 governments involved in the United Nations process.

Further, the process is so ponderous that by the time they are published, the data and studies the summaries for policymakers rely upon can be nearly 10 years out of date.

But even if the IPCC process was radically reformed, or replaced, Aotearoa needs its own, live, transparent, and continuously updated, summary for policymakers relevant to the New Zealand context.

A New Zealand climate-action commission summary for policymakers would provide a one-stop-shop for business, community, council and governmental policymakers.

https://www.carbonbrief.org/pcc-authors-discuss-how-science-meets-politics-in-the-latest-summary-for-policymakers

Population is climate-action pivotal

It is self-evident that a.) today’s population of 7 billion is having a ruinous environmental impact, not least of all on biodiversity, and that b.) the carrying capacity of the planet was, in any event, finite.

With there now being zero confidence that the Paris goal of zero-carbon by 2100, even if achieved, can avert dangerous global warming, and every likelihood that zero-carbon needed to have already been achieved for the ice sheets to survive long-term, the time to consider a population moratorium is now. It may be—and it can only be known in retrospect—that a near-total global population moratorium is the signal action that can realistically avert the onset of an extensively unsurvivable climate and multi-metre sea-level rise.

Aotearoa has a proud history of world leadership and is perfectly positioned to lead in the area that, to date, is only being tackled at city level.

The proposed climate commission should be specifically mandated to explore and advise on population.
### Nuclear power non-optional

Energy experts advise that public transport and the electrification of everything-that-can-practicably-be-electrified are essential climate actions. Aotearoa is perfectly placed to begin an examination of the radiation phobia that dates from the 1950s and which has remained impervious to the advances in understanding of DNA repair mechanisms—the mechanisms without which the natural world could not have evolved, given the significant levels of background and geological radiation.

It is tragic that the widespread ignorance of this subject is causing humanity to risk the unravelling of civilisation when the one proven and acceptably safe means of producing zero-carbon energy at scale, is, in most democracies, effectively outlawed.

Because of its former fame as a nuclear-free state, Aotearoa would be well placed to get the world’s attention if, after objectively examining the issue, it was able to declare it was right to become a nuclear-weapons-free zone, but wrong to conflate nuclear weapons with nuclear power.

The proposed zero-carbon bill should be agnostic regarding sources of zero-carbon energy.

### New Zealand climate strategy

When Professor Sir Peter Gluckman assumed his role as Prime Minister John Key’s chief science advisor, his first report recommended Aotearoa take a strategic approach to climate action. The action recommended was to concentrate on agricultural greenhouse gas research.

There are arguably five fields, in addition to agricultural greenhouse gas emissions, where Aotearoa could provide leadership that would be both in New Zealand’s best economic interests, and its existential interest—by helping break the international climate-action impasse:

1.) Population—see above
2.) nuclear power—see above
3.) geothermal power
4.) planted forestry
5.) democratic climate action.

New Zealand’s expertise in geothermal power requires no further elaboration here.

New Zealand’s expertise in planted forestry is respected worldwide, but poorly appreciated within Aotearoa. Aotearoa also pioneered planted indigenous forestry, but that work is so little-known that the government’s current billion-trees project is attempting to reinvent the wheel already invented by Jaap van Dorsser at the Forest Research Institute, which was sacrificed to privatisation. Scientifically designed and conducted trials in the Mahurangi Harbour catchment demonstrated that the plants produced by forestry nursery methods established as well as those raised by 10-times-more-expensive methods used by native plant nurseries.

Aotearoa, when women were granted the right to vote, became the world’s first full democracy. Democracy worldwide is under threat—not least of all, from demagoguery—even before global warming bites deeply. Now, more than ever, it is essential that the urgent and radical climate-action necessitated is determined democratically. This should include devices such as citizens assemblies, which have a demonstrated ability to achieve popular buy-in to change.

### Other

Background of submitter

Mahurangi Action Incorporated was established in 1974, as Friends of the Mahurangi. In 1977, Mahurangi Action revived the regionally significant annual Mahurangi Regatta. The associated, but editorially independent, Mahurangi Magazine has been fostering the re-examination of nuclear power since 2010.


Name  
Cimino Cole

Email

Country  
Aotearoa

Organisation (if the authorised feedback of...)

Mahurangi Action Incorporated