

Zero Carbon Act submission

Charlotte Kelly

I support setting a new emissions reduction target in legislation, but believe that the currently proposed target of net zero by 2050 is not strong enough to ensure a just future, nor meet the physical realities of climate change.

Climate change is one symptom of the unjust social, economic and political structures which exist today. Without addressing the underlying problems of free market capitalism, imperialism and patriarchy, we will not comprehensively, or justly, address climate change. As one example, the concept of economic growth is incompatible with a sustainable society and preventing catastrophic climate change. Any solution to climate change needs to address these underlying and pervasive problems. The Zero Carbon Bill, while one small step in the right direction, does not address the underlying social, economic and political structures which are resulting in climate change.

Given the effects current warming has had on the planet, it is absurd to put in place plans that allow the global temperatures to rise to even 2 degrees. A commitment to a target that does not give the highest probability of staying well below 2 degrees is an act of structural violence which condemns people to the loss of land, significant health risks, and food insecurity, among other devastating factors.

In order to curb the climate crisis, and play our part, we need to make immediate and rapid cuts to all greenhouse gases. I support a target, budgets and mitigation plan that sees the majority of emissions cut in the next decade. I do not support these cuts being prolonged, and deferred over a 30+ year period. I am concerned that such arbitrary targets, like those proposed, allow room for creative accountancy and superficial solutions, which deny real climate action and disempower the people most affected.

I accept that swift cuts will be challenging and will require us all to create new social and economic relationships that ensure a just and fair transition, however a bold approach is needed to mitigate the worst effects of climate change.

I am calling for legislation that:

- **Sets a goal of net-zero emissions across all greenhouse gases over the next decade.**
 - Methane needs to be treated the same as carbon dioxide emissions in order to give us the best chance of staying well below 2 degrees.
 - Methane is initially far more devastating to the climate because of its forcing effect. In the first two decades after its release, methane is 84 times more potent than carbon dioxide.
 - Considering our emissions are disproportionately made up of methane, compared to other countries, we need to set a global precedent for the treatment of methane.

- A bold confrontation of causes of NZ's soaring emissions would include a de-intensification of dairy farming.
- **Applies the 'firewall' principle - budgets and targets must be achieved by actual cuts in our own emissions, and not through the purchase of overseas carbon credits or an over-reliance on forests as carbon sinks.**
 - We need to focus on mitigation tools that have a direct feedback loop, result in the largest gross reduction in emissions, include all domestic emissions including air transport and shipping, benefit the communities in which they are situated, and enable local people to enact the structural change we need for a safe climate future.
 - Carbon credits have not proved effective at reducing emissions in the years they've been in place. They have entrenched existing forms of oppression - exploiting at risk communities and disregarding land tenure, and have acted in favour corporations and industries that seek to continue profiting from the destruction of the climate. I have no confidence that a review of the Emissions Trading Scheme will encourage the fundamental restructuring of relationships needed to address the role capitalism plays in exacerbating environmental degradation and growing inequalities.
 - We need to ensure sustainable and rapid cuts in gross emissions, and use the proposed billion trees to mostly support negative emissions. I have concerns for the sustainability, security and integrity of these forests, especially under the ETS, where perverse incentives can encourage monocultures and short term thinking. Plantings should ultimately enhance the ecosystems we depend upon and occur in consultation with iwi and local communities.
- **Is founded on the principles of climate justice and just transition by putting the responsibility for climate change with those most responsible for causing it. The poor, low-wage workers, indigenous, and women must be empowered and enabled by, not be laden with the costs of, climate change mitigation and adaptation.**
 - A just transition away from growth economy is essential, and would include support for those currently employed in extraction sectors, proper investment in green infrastructure including a range of well-paid jobs, consultation and support for communities affected by new renewable projects, and support for those who are at risk of fuel poverty thanks to destabilised fuel costs.
 - The Green Investment Fund needs to have rigorous accountability to ensure that money is going towards projects that are accessible to everyday people, are community led, and have a true effect that can be sustained over the long-term.
 - There must be no loophole for corporations to use subsidies to make a profit. We must stop fetishising business and the growth economy, and look elsewhere as we seek meaningful solutions to climate change. The green growth economy is a false solution, if the application of any sort of market-based principles to mitigation and adaptation projects, leads to a perverse incentive to continue with the practices that are causing climate change.
 - Te Tiriti must be a cornerstone of the Zero Carbon Act by giving effect to the partnership between iwi and the crown. There needs to be a clear process through which Māori perspectives and worldviews are placed front and centre in a just transition to a zero carbon economy.
 - While I recognise the role that some new technologies will have to play in mitigating the effects of climate change, indigenous knowledge of land processes and ways of life are powerful tools, and the government and others

should look to these as we seek to develop more sustainable, lower-carbon emitting ways of life.

- **Puts in place systems that ensure governments and the private sector are transparent and answerable to the public in terms of meeting our ambitions for a just transition and climate safety.**
 - The proposed Act should not allow budgets to be revised by the Climate Change Commission to a less ambitious target if circumstances change. We cannot afford a “get out of jail free” card at this stage. If some event is deemed by some to require a change in the target, governments can always legislate, but to change the Act would require recourse to Parliament and thorough debate – and so it should. This transparency is vital if we are to avoid special pleading and taking the easy way out.
 - I am broadly supportive of the required expertise and list of considerations that the Climate Commission should include. However, at present there is too much “consideration” given to effects on economic competitiveness, and not enough given to the disproportionate effect of any particular policy decision on women, Māori, Pasifika, and the poor. I support a climate commission which is representative of society including those most affected by climate change.
 - Climate science roles would also be essential. Impacts on the climate are in the end more important than impacts on the economy.
 - The climate commission should create a target, budgets and plans for government to ratify to ensure transparency and accountability. The Commission’s recommendations should reflect a memorandum of understanding that ensures their decisions and voice are used to uphold social and environmental justice and give advice that reflects a scientifically-fit response to climate change.