

## Setting New Zealand's post-2020 climate change target

### Submission form

The Government is seeking views on New Zealand's post-2020 climate change contribution under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

You can have your say by making a submission using this form or using the online tool available at [www.mfe.govt.nz/more/consultations](http://www.mfe.govt.nz/more/consultations).

For more information about this consultation:

- Read our [Consultation on New Zealand's post-2020 international climate change contribution web page](#)
- Read our discussion document: [New Zealand's Climate Change Target: Our contribution to the new international climate change agreement](#)

**Submissions close at 5.00pm on Wednesday 3 June 2015.**

### Publishing and releasing submissions

All or part of any written submission (including names of submitters), may be published on the Ministry for the Environment's website [www.mfe.govt.nz](http://www.mfe.govt.nz). Unless you clearly specify otherwise in your submission, we will consider that you have consented to website posting of both your submission and your name.

Contents of submissions may be released to the public under the Official Information Act 1982 following requests to the Ministry for the Environment (including via email). Please advise if you have any objection to the release of any information contained in a submission and, in particular, which part(s) you consider should be withheld, together with the reason(s) for withholding the information. We will take into account all such objections when responding to requests for copies of, and information on, submissions to this consultation under the Official Information Act.

The Privacy Act 1993 applies certain principles about the collection, use and disclosure of information about individuals by various agencies, including the Ministry for the Environment. It governs access by individuals to information about themselves held by agencies. Any personal information you supply to the Ministry in the course of making a submission will be used by the Ministry only in relation to the matters covered by this consultation. Please clearly indicate in your submission if you do not wish your name to be included in any summary of submissions that the Ministry may publish.

## Questions to guide your feedback

Your submission may address any aspect of the discussion document, but we would appreciate you paying particular attention to the questions posed throughout and listed in this form. You may answer some or all of the questions. To ensure your point of view is clearly understood, you should explain your rationale and provide supporting evidence where appropriate.

### Contact information

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### Objectives for the contribution

**1a. We have set the following three objectives for our contribution:**

- it is seen as a fair and ambitious contribution – both by international and domestic audiences
- costs and impacts on society are managed appropriately
- it must guide New Zealand over the long term in the global transition to a low emissions world.

**Do you agree with these objectives for our contribution?**

Yes - with a qualification (see 1b below).

**1b. What is most important to you?**

What is most important is that our targets are ambitious. A “fair contribution” for NZ implies that we should be setting targets proportionate to our size in the global economy, which of course is pretty small. But we should be thinking beyond that - because our international image is so linked to our environment, and because both our exports and our tourism industries are so dependent on that image. Couple that with our responsibilities to our smaller Pacific neighbours, and it is apparent that we should make more than just a “fair” contribution.

Therefore we need genuinely ambitious targets, and genuine planning to meet them. A government that is wary of the potential negative electoral impact of such targets would be sensible to also genuinely try to seek cross party cooperation in both the target setting and the planning.

## What would be a fair contribution for New Zealand?

### 2. What do you think the nature of New Zealand's emissions and economy means for the level of target that we set?

While many of our emissions relate to our agricultural industries, that really does not excuse our emissions per person being around 17 tonnes per annum (and not dropping), compared to European emissions having reduced since 1990 from 9 tonnes to 7.5 tonnes per person per annum. That's now less than half ours per person – and they do have farm animals too!

Couple that with the fact that a very significant proportion of our electricity generation is already from renewable sources, and there is obviously a lot more we must start doing differently.

So our specific ambitious target areas should include:

#### **A Electricity**

- Moving to a 100% renewable electricity supply within a defined period of time
- Encouraging geothermal energy use.
- Ensuring support for individual and local community electricity supply initiatives.
- Promoting initiatives to support development of ocean energy technology.

#### **B Transport**

- Focussing on rail and other public transport infrastructure rather than just on roads.
- Encouraging electric vehicle use, and also supporting use of alternative sustainable transport fuels.

#### **C Fossil Fuel Use**

- Phasing out of both direct and indirect fossil fuel subsidies.
- Stopping fossil fuel exploration, including deep sea drilling and onshore fracking, in NZ.

#### **D Emissions Trading Scheme, & Emissions Reduction**

- Ensuring the Emissions Trading Scheme has sufficient teeth to actively discourage pollution, rather than subsidising polluters.

#### **E Planning, Legal & Reporting**

- Initiating, and actively promoting and supporting, cross-party action planning on climate change.
- Setting up an independent Climate Commission, with authority and responsibility to monitor and report on target achievement.
- Ensuring all climate change target costings reporting includes both costs and benefits, and also the estimated costs of inaction.

## How will our contribution affect New Zealanders?

### 3. What level of cost is appropriate for New Zealand to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions? For example, what do you think would be a reasonable impact on annual household consumption?

This is not a question that most individuals or individual households can answer usefully. But what is important is that we move beyond "short term-ism" and electoral cycles in determining our response, which is one reason why cross party cooperation is essential.

Obviously we would all like our lives changed as little as possible by target actions, but the reality is that the less we do in the short term, the greater the negative impact on individuals and families will be in the longer term. That's why we need real government leadership at this time.

**4. Of the opportunities for New Zealand to reduce its emissions (as outlined on page 15 of the discussion document), which do you think are the most likely to occur, or be most important for New Zealand?**

They are all important, and should all be seen as priorities for action.

## Summary

**5. How should New Zealand take into account the future uncertainties of technologies and costs when setting its target?**

Given that these are uncertainties, we must take a "what if...?" risk management approach.

But first and foremost, we should be recognising that for a whole variety of reasons, we in NZ actually have a huge potential competitive advantage, both in taking innovative approaches to climate change management, and in developing a low carbon but still well performing economy that could be a model for others as well as benefiting ourselves.

## Other comments

**6. Is there any further information you wish the Government to consider? Please explain.**

### Leadership, and Doing More.

As already suggested, if ever there was a time for real Government leadership, it is now. To date, both nationally and in global forums, we have generally been rather unimpressive in our contributions – and even more so in meeting our previously set targets. Our emissions per person have continued to rise when we have said they would go down, and we have talked about "doing our share" but to date really have not and are not.

We seem to find it hard to look positively beyond the current economic cycle and to a low-carbon future, and there is seemingly a desperation not to "scare the horses" politically by risking upsetting the large number of New Zealanders who appear to prefer not to have to think about climate change, but instead would rather accept the assurances of our political leaders that - to put it simply – "trust us, we know what we're doing".

But do they?! Take just one fairly significant example. We are now told that tourism is in for a big positive jump in coming years, and may well surpass dairying as our main export earner. The reason many tourists come to NZ (because let's face it, we're not the easiest or cheapest country to get to) is because of our reputation. Clean and green? Yeah right! Already we know the state of our rivers and lakes is of increasing concern, and in a carbon-reducing world our environmental image (and whether our environmental reality correctly reflects that) will be a major draw card - or a growing turnoff - to increasingly concerned travellers.

So shouldn't we be looking to our future and committing to make NZ a genuine environmental showpiece in this regard? That means not just seeking to do our share, but instead - in our own national interests - doing more than our share. Buying carbon credits from countries such as former Russian States is a fairly negative way of promoting our country as a positive environmental destination!

What about agriculture and forestry? Agriculture is responsible for almost half our emissions, but is also incredibly important to our economy – and to us all individually. New Zealand's Global Research Alliance on Agricultural Greenhouse Gases (GRA) initiative is a real positive step with potentially real international promise in the longer term. However, our farming community is coming to realize that things are already changing with our climate now, and there is growing recognition that we will have to find ways to manage the consequences of those changes. Obviously increasingly severe and frequent droughts, storms and other climate disruptions will impact on farmers, their stock and crops, and their practices. Shouldn't we be doing more than our share to try to help such major export earners as our dairy, beef and lamb industries in the short and medium term too? Steps such as caps on animal numbers in certain locations, for example, may not be popular with some, but if they encourage changes of

farming practice which help slow the increase in animal emissions, they should be implemented. Likewise, while the most recent forestry support initiatives are positive, we need to be doing much more – and soon!

### Legacy.

Naturally, governments would like to see themselves as "legacy governments". In other words they would like to be remembered into the future for having achieved something or things of lasting substance. The flag debate is perhaps the most obvious current example of this - won't it be nice to be remembered as the government which led changing our flag?!

We've had relatively few real legacy governments over the years, so it would be memorable to be one of them. It's a genuinely laudable goal. But it would be rather ironic if, perhaps in 20 or even just 10 years' time, the legacy of this government is - instead of the flag-changing government - to be remembered as the government that didn't have the stomach to take a real lead on climate change, that instead "did a Nero" and carried on as if nothing really untoward was happening, when it could have shown true leadership when it was needed.

Because if it was ever needed, it is now. Climate change is the big issue of our generation. This isn't the time to simply try to reflect the wishes of the majority for electoral reasons. Of course most of us will always prefer not to have to face an unpleasant truth, of course it's easier to pretend a "steady as you go" course, with a few minimally challenging lifestyle changes, is all we really need to do at this stage. The modelling for this consultation process seems to avoid providing any useful information about the likely impacts and costs of relative climate **inaction**. But are we New Zealanders really, as a community and as a generation, so selfish that we would rather face the minimum possible financial and lifestyle challenges now, and leave the real and increasingly major challenges for our children and grandchildren later? If we really are, then I'm embarrassed, for the first time, to be a New Zealander.

But I don't think we are, so I hope against hope that the targets set will reflect true leadership, both for us and for the global community. We are owed nothing less. Political pragmatism is not leadership. We don't elect governments to simply do what we would like. An elected government is privy to information, expertise and advice that the rest of us cannot easily access, and we expect it to use that to take a lead, show us direction, tell us why, and to make decisions in our long term interests that we sometimes will not like.

Please - do it!

## When your submission is complete

Email your completed submission to [climate.contribution@mfe.govt.nz](mailto:climate.contribution@mfe.govt.nz) or post to Climate Change Contribution Consultation, Ministry for the Environment, PO Box 10362, Wellington 6143.

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