

Submission: Climate Change Contribution Consultation

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I have a background in science and psychology as well as having taught Environmental Studies at tertiary level. I have been following the greenhouse gas problem for 27 years.

I am extremely concerned at the lack of progress made in addressing this issue of greenhouse gas emissions and their current and future impacts on the life as we know it. This is despite the problem having been known about and discussed for many years. We cannot afford to procrastinate any longer. Token measures will not solve the problem.

The impacts of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere are already being felt with more moisture in the atmosphere increasing the severity of storms, oceans become more acid affecting the food chain, and warmer oceans and land ice melting leading to increasing rates of sea level rise and inundation. These changes affect not only human society but also the natural world in which we live.

With future warming already inevitable due to the delay in the impact of past emissions we can no longer afford to wait and see what happens, nor can we rely on other parties to fix the problem. Already some impacts are irreversible including several metres of sea level rise being locked in.

We need to demonstrate some leadership, which doesn’t necessarily mean doing more than we should but by doing what is our fair share. New Zealand is currently one of the largest emitters per head of population. Our cuts need to reflect that embarrassing fact.

While in the past our representatives have dug up excuses such it being very difficult for us to do anything, failure plus excuses does not equal success.

New Zealand needs to commit a 40% reduction in emissions by 2030 and to being carbon neutral by 2050. We need to have a plan on how we are going to achieve that and we need to start putting that plan into action now. This plan should include no new coal, a credible effective carbon tax which includes agriculture, support for renewable energy, public transport, walking and cycling, 100% renewable electricity, and no further subsidies for fossil fuels.

While the government has been warning of the cost of action, little attention has been paid to the very real costs of inaction. What is it worth to prevent disastrous consequences? The opportunities provided by moving to more renewable energy, to a more resilient approach to agriculture, and to healthier lifestyles continue to be ignored.

Business as usual is unacceptable as are weak commitments. It is time to be bold and to do what we can to prevent some of the worst of the many dire predictions due to inaction eventuating.