Climate Contribution Submission

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Objectives for the contribution
Q1a & b
I agree with the objectives, and 1 & 3 are most important.

Q2 What is a fair contribution?

40% below 1990 levels of net emissions, by 2030

The November 2014 Climate Change Performance Index ranks NZ 43rd out of the 58 countries that account for 90% of global CO2 emissions. This is so shameful and embarrassing for NZ that we must propose and adhere to a proper “fair and ambitious” target. We must also be seen by our Pacific neighbours to be undertaking real action to reduce global warming which is having obvious adverse effects on them already. Buying overseas carbon credits through a dodgy ETS has not encouraged NZ to phase out our use of fossil fuels and limit methane emissions.

The average world temperature must not exceed 2 degrees C increase to give us a 66% chance of keeping a climate we can live in. There is momentum in the complex physical climatic system that results in global warming, and we would be wise custodians of the earth to aim for less than 2 degrees. I submit that we should be up there with the other countries offering 40% cut.

Notes
The current NZ ETS is badly broken and not encouraging industry to reduce GHG emissions at all. The big polluters have been given up to 90% free carbon credits from the taxpayer. Fonterra and other factories still have coal fired burners. NZs ETS was ranked the lowest of any carbon price scheme in operation in the World Bank’s 2014 review “State and Trends of Carbon Pricing”. Alistair Barry’s documentary “Hot Air” explains why the Government created this sham, and we need an independent Climate Change Committee to ensure it is not repeated, or continued.

The ETS is a market mechanism, and the fluctuations and political tinkering in response to lobbying by industrial sectors makes it impossible for long term decisions such as forestry etc. When the ETS was proposed many forests were cut down and turned into dairy farms, so the land use changed changed from carbon sink to methane emitter. The ETS isn’t working and we need a carbon tax as well (or instead).
Q2 in the Discussion Document: What do you think the nature of NZ emissions and economy means for the level of target that we set?

The 40% reduction should be net because we can and should reduce all types of GHGs. CO2 will be the easiest, but CH4 and NOx are also possible.

NZers have such a high carbon footprint at 17t of carbon per capita that we can't use special pleading because of hydro and cows to say we can't afford to reduce GHGs.

Agricultural emissions.

We can reduce the number of dairy cows. 90% of the milk produced in NZ is exported, so its like any other commodity; subjected to market fluctuations, and the environmental costs of methane and NOx production, N leaching into groundwater and surface runoff causing stream pollution are not factored into the true cost of the product. It also appears that we use the export dollars to import carbon credits - how crazy is that! There are farming methods available now with less livestock and artificial fertiliser that still make a living for farmers. We shouldn't be allowing farming to damage the "clean green" image that 50% of our jobs including the tourist industry rely on.

Energy emissions

The Government is currently undertaking policies that increase the GHG emissions in the transport sector. Proposing to build more motorways and bridges, delaying Auckland's proposed light rail, and putting financial constraints on Kiwi rail so it is not able to electrify the North Island Main trunk Line. Buying cheap dirty diesel engines when we have so much renewable electricity is not the way to reduce GHG emissions. Why can't I buy biodiesel for my modern diesel car?

It is crazy that the Government is encouraging fossil fuel exploration in NZ, and particularly in the environmentally risky deep sea. Those oil companies are using (ie wasting) fossil fuel to try to find more, when the world already knows where there is more oil and gas than we can burn if we want to keep the global temperature increase under 2 degrees C.

The Government is encouraging urban sprawl in Auckland which is energy intensive: the roads and concrete have high concentrations of embedded energy and the residents will need to travel further to work etc than if the city increased accommodation with infill housing and highrise.

Soil is also a carbon sink, and we need to protect it from erosion, fires, drought, high winds, urban sprawl, hazardous chemicals (which kill the soil organisms), industrial farming practices. It takes decades to build up a good store of carbon in the soil, and regulation and education are needed to ensure this happens.
Q3 How will our contribution affect NZers?

This is a loaded question, you haven’t asked “What will happen if we continue to do next to nothing?” Apart from the increased global warming and eventually run away climate change making the world uninhabitable for the future generations of humans and most other animals. And apart from the shame of being in a country that could do a lot and in fact has done nothing.

- The cost of our trading partners boycotting our products (we will be seen as free riders).
- The disastrous cost of having to change quickly to a carbon free economy when the oil runs out.
- The opportunity cost of not having been involved in clean technologies, and the sustainable job opportunities provided.
- The disastrous cost of having to cope with severe weather events, hikes in insurance and sea level rise affecting our coastal communities and extensive infrastructure.

I assume that it wont only be households paying for the 40% reduction, but also industries, land developers and farmers.

Q4

All of the opportunities listed on page 15 are commendable. The Government needs to provide subsidies and other mechanisms to make these long term solutions economic now ie biofuel, forestry (both native and exotic). What can be done to add value to the harvested logs rather than shipping them overseas? (Note we need to be aware of fire risks to forests from severe weather events and global warming, and plant species in locations where that is less likely.)

Biofuel has been around for a while and biofuel blends could be widely available if there was an incentive now.

The ideology of markets and voluntary compliance by industries cannot bring about a paradigm shift, particularly as the environment and future generations have no voice in the market place.

Q5

Waiting for technology is not an option. Yes we have to be flexible enough to incorporate it into our plan, but we must not procrastinate, proceed with BUA and delay reducing GHG emission while we wait.

Although the engineers and researchers are always hopeful, either the scale up, or the costing structures, or side effects, or the lack of other technologies always delay these processes. Uncertainty created by politics is a serious dampener to change. It is not possible to invent energy, and we have to accept that we cannot (and should not) rely on the energy- dense easily transported fossil fuel.
Agriculture is a hard problem, but while the methane remains our responsibility we will have to reduce stock numbers and change farming methods while scientists try to remove, or reduce the methanogenic bacteria from the rumen without seriously affecting the animal’s health.

Q 6

I am concerned that the discussion document warns that the “intended” contribution will be provisional before the rules etc are confirmed. I fear that the Government will propose something to look good and then back out of it later. Our track record in this regard is bad.

I also fear that without firm milestones, mandatory reporting and transparency the Government will delay and wait until it is too close to 2030 to achieve the 40% reduction. An independent Climate Change Commission should be appointed to oversee this task.

To undertake serious GHG reduction NZ will needs an Act similar to the UK’s Climate Change Act. Generation Zero have described the benefits in their document “The Big Ask” and I endorse their proposal. The Act would require the Government to produce credible plans to meet future emissions targets and that makes the issue of climate change less politicised through legislated targets and an independent system of accountability.

I notice that the aid NZ gives to the Pacific Islands is not assisting them cope with the real problems they are having living on their low lying islands. NZ should be helping them mitigate the effects of increased severe weather events as well as rising sea level.

The public know that we can’t party till we drop, or keep driving BAU until we go over the cliff, and we shouldn’t pander to the career politicians ideas that lead to pitiful and shameful attempts to stall NZs involvement in playing our part in a timely, honest and fair reduction in GHG emissions.