

From: [Forest & Bird, Wellington Branch](#)
To: [Climate Contribution](#)
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Forest & Bird, Wellington Branch submission on New Zealand's Climate Change Target
This submission is on behalf of the Forest & Bird Wellington Branch members. Our Branch membership of 1,700 (approximately 2,000 people) resides in the geographic area that closely aligns with that of the Wellington City Council from the south coast to the Porirua Harbour, with a few living outside of this area.

Our organisation has a history of advocacy on behalf of nature and supports initiatives that are advantageous to our natural world. Our members continue to make a substantial contribution to better outcomes for the fauna and flora of Wellington. Our reason for submitting on New Zealand's Climate Change Target is that it is people and their activities that have the greatest impact on our climate and our indigenous biodiversity.

Overall, the view we hold is that the proposed contribution that New Zealand should commit to is a moral one. New Zealand was once covered in primary forest, wetland and grassland all of which provided carbon sequestration. Most of this native flora was destroyed in the late 19th and 20th century by clear-felling, burning and draining and conversion to pasture. This action was an early contribution to climate change through the loss of the permanent carbon sink this vegetation provided.

We are a contributor to the problem and being a resourceful nation and known for innovation and 'getting things done'. We can and should make changes necessary to achieve a climate neutral target by 2040 and in so doing justify our reputation for 'punching above our weight'. ("Climate neutral" is considered by some a more appropriate term than "carbon neutral", since CO₂ is not the only greenhouse gas driving climate change. Other greenhouse gases regulated by the Kyoto Protocol are methane (CH₄), nitrous oxide (N₂O), sulphur hexafluoride (SF₆), hydrofluorocarbons, and perfluorocarbons.).

The document is uninspiring and has no vision but attempts to depict New Zealand as a minor player having special and unique conditions that inhibit our ability to make such a commitment. It is clearly focused on a financial spreadsheet with cost being a significant consideration as demonstrated by question 3 about the level of reduced annual household consumption people are prepared to make to achieve our emissions target. This is in the knowledge that our per capita contribution to greenhouse emission is well above the global average. The document tries to make a case that since New Zealand's relative carbon dioxide emissions on a per capita basis is lower than other developed countries namely USA and Australia then we could have a target 10 to 20% above 1990 levels.

Every country will have its own unique set of circumstances, it is not feasible to continue to conduct 'business as usual' and expect the dramatic changes that will be necessary to keep global warming below survivable levels. We are in a new paradigm, the world has changed and we must change with it but the document discussion is biased toward the costs of change and continuing the status quo with minor technology driven improvements to agriculture and forestry. This said, there are plenty of examples in the document of new opportunities but it is deficient in showing the economic benefits that these would bring. A simple example is electric vehicles require less maintenance and when used in conjunction with solar panels would have lower running costs.

The discussion has been around green house emissions however an equally important aspect to climate change is carbon sequestration. Our economy is vulnerability because of our reliance on the primary industry sector which is energy intensive and contributing to global warming. A reduction in pasturage and a greater use of land for crops, native forest, wetland and native grassland would help reduce emissions and aid carbon sequestration.

We support carbon sequestration initiatives that help other countries keep their indigenous forest and wetland intact and in consequence its biodiversity.

Our response to the questions:

Q1 – New Zealand does not have a unique situation that cannot be changed. Our contribution should be based on our ability to become climate neutral. Of the three options the transition to a sustainable low emissions is a priority.

Q2 – The current economy has a high emissions foot print. It should not influence the level of the target that we set. It does however mean that the make-up of the economy will need to change to achieve the target. This is the new paradigm

Q3 – The question assumes there will be a cost to reducing greenhouse gas emissions but even if there were this is an investment that must be made. The figures given do not appear excessive.

Q4 – All the opportunities listed will occur and it is clear that transport, buildings and infrastructure must improve energy efficiency and that forests and biophilic cities will play a major role in the mix.

Q5 – The technologies of the future are in development now and discussed in technical journals, many are in use overseas. New Zealand is well behind in its uptake of technology and needs to look to countries overseas with ambitious targets for inspiration and direction.