

The Religious Society of Friends - Aotearoa/New Zealand

*Te Hāhi Tūhauwiri*

**Quaker Futures Committee**

**Response to the**

**New Zealand Climate Change Target Consultation**

Submitted 1<sup>st</sup> June 2015

The Futures Committee of the Religious Society of Friends appreciates the opportunity of commenting on the New Zealand's Climate Change Targets to be submitted for the Paris UNFCCC conference this year. We understand the difficulty of presenting a complex issue in a way that can be understood by a broad public, but we consider that the consultation document misses out on many opportunities of taking a more constructive and beneficial approach to the challenge of climate change.

Quakers have always shown a strong commitment to peace and social justice. Through staying in touch with each other we learn about the issues that are most important to "Friends" and to the communities around the world.

In connection to Climate Change; we are concerned that New Zealand should respond effectively to its responsibilities to the future, especially to the younger members of the population. Especially at this critical time, when it is becoming clear that the national submissions to the UNFCCC are far from being an adequate response to the challenge, it is important to consider carefully how best NZ can configure its own response to promote the overall global response required.

At present New Zealand is not responding effectively to the threats reported by scientific authorities and this failure of leadership deprives the young of hope. We provide the following ideas with the sincere hope that our submission might influence policy.

Firstly we would like the committee to consider the following six issues which we prepared for the Prime Minister earlier this year.

1. **Duty to Protect.** Climate change needs to be considered as a major issue of national security based on protection of citizens, with funded on an appropriate basis. Such funding would support development of community and industrial perceptions and practices to enable the country to engage effectively with the changing demands. See for instance statements by the [US Pentagon](#) and the G7 report "[New Climate for Peace](#)".
2. **Care for the Environment.** Responsibilities go far beyond simply controlling global temperature increases to the overall maintenance of the health of the environment which supports succeeding generations. This includes the way that agriculture and forestry affects the environment, regenerates the soils and supports biodiversity.
3. **Global cooperation.** The viability of a coherent solution to this global challenge depends on a high level of cooperation amongst nations, to which NZ has a substantial contribution to make. We need to put substantial resources into promoting such cooperation and developing ways in which the many conflicts can be resolved.

4. **Historic obligations.** NZ is a relatively wealthy nation whose wealth has been based substantially on its long term consumption of fossil fuels. As such it has a responsibility to take leadership in advancing the reduction in emissions, particularly in terms of carbon generation.
5. **Public engagement and leadership.** National leadership is required to engage widespread involvement throughout the nation to generate the changes needed to make the rapid changes in emissions required.
6. **Our youth.** The uncertainty about the future is placing great pressure on many youth who are increasingly wary of making long term commitments, including starting a family. The long term health of the society depends on a vibrant, forward-looking national strategy which will engage the youth and convince them of the value in working for the future.

In this context, we offer our responses to the questions posed in the discussion document:

## **RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS POSED BY THE DISCUSSION DOCUMENT:**

### **Q1 (a) Do you agree with the above objectives for our contribution?**

Yes – with the following provisions

1. Fairness is seen in the context of historical emissions whereby NZ has developed its economic standards on the basis of many decades of emissions as a prosperous developed world, while many other countries have not had that privilege. This mitigation program must be seen firstly as a moral, rather than an economic issue.
2. The program needs to be accompanied by industrial innovations that provide greater opportunities for employment.
3. That “appropriately” means with fairness and justice, and that taxation is used to ensure that those on low level incomes are not disadvantaged. Also that significant industrial disruptions are mitigated through a program such as “Just Transitions” [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Just\\_Transition](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Just_Transition)
4. That “long term” is seen as 30-40 years, and that adaptation means adapting our industry and social structures to enable low emission prosperity. It also needs to be a binding agreement that carries over subsequent governments.

### **(b) What is most important to you?**

Point 1 is most important – that we achieve the needed protection of our environment on which our long term survival depends. Climate Change needs to be treated as a security risk as outlined by the [US Pentagon](#) and the G7 report “[New Climate for Peace](#)”.

### **Q2 What do you think the nature of New Zealand’s emissions and economy means for the level of target that we set?**

The question is set the wrong way around. We need to prioritise the setting of the necessary target and then consider the implications for our economy. While NZ has the option of free-riding on the initiatives of other nations, the outcomes for a world dominated by competition between states determined to minimise their commitment would be much worse than intentionally or unintentionally being overly-generous.

The nature of NZ's emissions and economy highlights how drastically NZ needs to change its economic structures to be able to reach any credible goals. NZ needs to go beyond its narrow focus on market systems to introduce a series of initiatives to promote positive social attitudes, encourage innovative green industries and to modify the profligate lifestyles which generate considerable unnecessary consumption and the associated emissions. We also need to ensure that our transport infrastructures move from fossil fuels to electricity (not vice versa, as some are currently being driven), that our public transport systems, especially the railway is much more effectively used, and that ways are found to ensure a fair price for micro-generation of electricity.

**Q3 What level of cost is appropriate for New Zealand to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions? For example, what would be a reasonable reduction in annual household consumption?**

In answering this question effectively, we would need to consider factors far beyond household costs. For instance we would need to take into account the costs of not acting, such as a seriously degraded environment, disruptions in society, as well as the impact of international effects such as the breakdown in international order, migration and trade disruption. We would also need to consider many benefits of acting, such as shifting the emphasis of business to cleaner and more environmentally supportive modes, and of moving to healthier lifestyles. Finally, 'fairness' requires that any costs falling on households must preferentially fall on those that could best afford it.

In making sense of this complex of issues we can be guided by Denmark's success in reducing emissions and their [commitment](#) to become carbon neutral by 2050 with minimal cost. Other guides are the [New Climate Economy Report](#) and the [World Bank](#) discussion on raising finance.

**Q4 Of these opportunities which do you think are the most likely to occur, or be most important for New Zealand?**

Items 1 & 3: Energy efficiency and oil price independence are most likely, and act to some extent already.

Items 4 & 5: are the most important for NZ's long term future.

The Business Growth Agenda needs to be embedded in the climate change program.

Please consult: The New Climate Economy <http://newclimateeconomy.report/>

**Q5 How should New Zealand take into account the future uncertainties of technologies and costs when setting its target?**

NZ should take a precautionary approach, recognising that the costs of inadequate action may be very high. In selecting technologies, a risk management approach, with the risks of each option being as clearly as possible described. Bearing in mind that the value of any technology is more in the way that it is used, rather than in the technology itself. One of the important aspects of simple community centred approaches also is that they may be beneficial in many different situations.

A critical 'technology' is peace, both domestic and international. An environment of conflict, particularly military conflict, imposes enormous costs, and may make a solution to climate change impossible. NZ needs to make a major investment in developing peaceful relations amongst nations, demonstrating its own integrity, promoting integrity amongst others and practising cooperation and sharing at every opportunity.

### **Setting a Target**

It is essential that targets represent mitigation action within NZ, and only to a limited degree, mitigation outside NZ for legitimate purposes. Otherwise they do not reflect any significant contribution to global reduction in emissions, nor will they be sustainable.

To gain an appreciation of the significance of targets the appended figure was extracted from NZ's Sixth National Communication to the UNFCCC. Straight lines drawn to show the changes required to achieve the current commitments of 5% below 1990 levels in 2020, applied to both net and gross emissions. If these commitments are achieved by genuine reductions in emissions, then an objective of 40% reduction below 1990 levels by 2030 should be achievable. However, the size of these reductions suggest the large scale use of foreign credits will be employed. Such actions would not reflecting any mitigation within NZ, and not necessarily any significant mitigation outside NZ, and would not be sustainable. Thus subsequent targets will depend on how the 2020 targets are achieved.

The large-scale use of international credits will degrade NZ's integrity as a country committed to environmental responsibility and retard NZ's economic transformation to sustainability.

In presenting the national contributions the government needs to be specific about the mechanisms that it intends to employ to achieve the 2020 targets and what options are available to achieve suggested 2030 targets such as 40% below 1990 levels.

In order to demonstrate the nation's commitment to it's goals it is imperative that the INDC be reflected in binding, national New Zealand policy. This can be either as an addition to, or alteration of, the Emissions Trading Scheme (and the Climate Change Response Act of 2002).

### **Further Comments**

1. **Transport** is a major generator of emissions and requires greater consideration. There are important reductions to be made by promoting greater efficiency (e.g. regulating the efficiency of imported vehicles), changing modalities (car to cycle or walking, truck to railway or ship, private to public transport), and in the reduction of travel by greater use of electronic communication and reduction of recreational travel by moving recreational travel from international to national to local dimensions. Also renewable fuels such as electricity or biofuels can be promoted far more effectively. Current shifts from electricity to diesel taking place with Wellington buses and the central North Island railway line demonstrate a failure of the market which needs correcting through government intervention.
2. **Fossil Fuel Use.** The increasing divestment from fossil fuel industries, epitomised by the [Rockefeller family](#), is leading to high risks as warned by the [Bank of England](#). This

indicates the need to reduce one's reliance on the industry in a planned way as indicated by [Carbon Tracker](#). In particular, we need to abandon support of fossil fuel exploration and development for energy purposes within our territories, and move as rapidly as possible to eliminate fossil fuel use in our electricity system. Such activities only exacerbate the problems we are trying to address.

3. **Diversification of Energy Sources.** A wide variety of energy sources need to be developed, including from ocean waves, ocean currents, osmosis, biomass and refuse.
4. **Micro-generation of Electricity.** These opportunities (particularly solar power) are currently poorly developed because of inflexibilities within the current electricity trading system. There needs to be adaptation to enable micro-generators to receive a fair price considering the location and timing of their input. This must not be achieved at the expense of those without micro-generation.
5. **The ETS.** Currently over-reliance on the ETS has proven unsuccessful due to many distortions and uncertainties. There is [evidence](#) that it has set back the forestry industry in ways which will degrade NZ's mitigation capabilities and it has also marginalised other means of promoting mitigation. The ETS needs to be altered or substituted for a better policy. At least, a price fix for carbon credits, a cap on emissions and a limit to international carbon credit trading need to be put in place. Preferably, a carbon tax will be employed instead of an ETS. For instance the "Fee and Dividend" system for major carbon emitters has worked well in [British Columbia](#) and is being considered for [Ontario](#). Any ETS retained needs to be disciplined to ensure a level of predictability and meaningful pricing.
6. **Agriculture** plays a critical role in both emissions profile and national income. Currently its ~50% contribution to national GHG emissions and the difficulty of reducing this is a major impediment to our mitigation strategy. The government's rationale is that NZ is producing much needed food for the world, and is capable of producing food with less emissions than other producers. Evidence needs to be provided for this claim. Also, if that rationale is used to justify our exports we must apply it equally to our imports and the environmental impact their production has to this global concern. Further, there needs to be a basic assessment of whether the threat that agricultural emissions presents to our future warrants the continuation of the industry in its current form. Are there better ways of producing food?  
  
Improvements in techniques should reduce inorganic phosphate and nitrate fertilisers in favour of organic methods including [bio char](#).
7. **A Climate Change Commission** needs to be established to provide a continuing, stable, non political group to bring expert advice and coordination on this very complex and demanding issue.

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**Fig 1.1 from NZ's Sixth National Communication (p 16) Identifying the current 2020 commitments (5% below 1990 levels) for both Net and Gross emissions.**

Note: Linear extrapolation from 2015 levels indicate carbon neutrality at 2024 and 2035 respectively, which are quite ambitious targets. It also indicates how challenging the current commitments is, unless extensive use is made of external offsets.

