

Setting New Zealand's post-2020 climate change target

**Dr David Galler
Intensive Care Specialist
Middlemore Hospital**

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Introduction

Thanks for the opportunity to make a submission.

That said, considering the critical importance of the topic, I am surprised and disappointed by the short duration and lack of opportunity you are affording the public to debate this issue amongst themselves and with you. The reasons for this can only be guessed but one cannot help thinking that your call for "consultation" is a disingenuous one. Please can you tell me why so short a time and so few meetings?

Overall the INDC discussion document lacks aspiration and ambition. This is not the approach that has made NZ what it once was, a true world leader and innovator. The report frames climate action as costly – ignoring the greater costs of climate inaction and the real gains to our health and economy by taking action now.

Health Costs and Benefits

- Your discussion document is heavily weighted on the costs of any interventions and ignores the many benefits from health gains and significant savings to the health sector. Have costings of climate action included these gains and cost savings?
- NZers at highest health risk from climate changes include Maori, Pacific peoples, children, the elderly and people on low incomes. How is the government going to mitigate these risks in developing fair climate policy?

Other costs and benefits

- It is well established that the cost of climate change impacts are far higher than the costs of climate action. Has the government accounted for the cost of these impacts on NZ, including exposure to global impacts?
- What are the true costs of the dairy industry in NZ and how might these be factored into a realistic appraisal of the total cost benefit from climate change interventions.
- What are the opportunities for NZ business to leap ahead through innovative technologies and approaches that might become viable with brave and bold leadership from our Government? What are the opportunity costs to date for businesses as we fall further and further behind by not embarking on the kinds of innovations seen in countries where there is a realistic price on carbon?
- The government has previously had emissions reduction targets but has failed to develop a meaningful plan to achieve them. What steps will the government take now to make a fair low and eventually zero carbon economy a reality?
- When NZ has so much to gain as a low carbon economy, why is this consultation so short, rushed and seems to be encouraging inaction?

- Are our points being recorded, how will the consultation results be used and will all the submissions be made publicly available online?

I urge you to adopt this stance:

1. Lead for a global zero **carbon** target by 2050 – and the same NZ target before 2050
2. Pledge at least 40% cuts by 2030 in our gross **domestic greenhouse gas emissions** compared with 1990, towards at least 95% by 2050
3. Place an immediate moratorium on new fossil fuel exploration, phasing out existing extraction in the next decade
4. Demand in the INDC, both cross-party agreement and policies to achieve these targets

More specifically answering the questions posed:

Qtn 1a and 1b: Objectives for the contribution

- *it is seen as a fair and ambitious contribution –by international and domestic audiences*
- *Costs, savings and impacts need to be managed appropriately*

I agree with the objectives but have the following comments:

NZ's contribution must be a fair, ambitious, credible and sufficient contribution to keep total global carbon dioxide emissions well below our planet's limited capacity to warm safely for humans and the ecological systems we depend on for survival.

Healthy people depend on a healthy climate – we can't afford **not** to take real climate action. Ambitious climate action is the best investment in our future. The costs of climate change are much greater than the costs of responsible action and climate change will affect our most vulnerable households the most. Health co-benefits of mitigation need to be included in the equation. Costs and benefits of action need to be shared equitably both between countries and within New Zealand.

- *It must guide NZ over the long term in the global transition to a low emissions economy*

NZ's top priority is to take real steps in this government term to rapidly future-proof our country – building on our clean energy strengths, diversifying our exports and creating a resilient, fair and healthy emissions-free economy.

Question 2: What would be a fair contribution for New Zealand

Current and future human wellbeing depends upon not exceeding our global carbon budget. I am calling for a global zero **carbon** target by 2050 – and NZ needs to take credible steps now to reach this well before 2050 Further, we need to keep up with other wealthy nations in pledging at least 40% cuts in our **gross domestic greenhouse gas emissions** compared with 1990 emissions, by 2030, towards at least 95% by 2050. Importantly, the world has five times the amount of fossil fuels in reserve as we can afford to burn. We need to immediately commit to zero new fossil fuel exploration and phase out existing extraction in the next decade. Our Intended Nationally Determined Contribution needs to also commit to the cross-party agreement and national policies needed to achieve these targets.

Questions 3 and 4: *How will our contribution affect New Zealanders*

What level of cost is appropriate?

The costs of climate inaction far exceed the costs of taking action and we need to account for this in our calculations. The sooner we act, the more likely we are to see overall benefits rather than costs. Encouragingly, there are significant short- and medium-term health and equity co-benefits to be gained, especially by shifting from cars to active and public transport; improving housing energy efficiency and shifting to climate-friendly home heating; reducing red meat and dairy intake in our diets and reducing dairy farming; phasing out coal and lignite mining. These co-benefits also need to be included in our calculation of costs and benefits of action. Costs of making the needed transition need to be borne fairly, with wealthy polluters paying and low income households supported to make a healthy transition.

Important & likely opportunities?

The document focuses heavily on the half of our emissions that come from agriculture, but the other 50% come from transport, housing and other energy use. We already have the technology and policies at hand to reduce these emissions – what is most needed now is the cross-party political will to put them in place. We need to come clean on the total costs of reliance on ruminant livestock farming and diversify our export sector. That will most likely be spurred by sending NZers a strong signal through a truly realistic price on Carbon.

Question 5: Summary

Taking into account future uncertainties of technologies and costs in setting a target?

The precautionary principle requires us to act now. Risks of further delay are very high, while we have good certainty about potential short to medium term benefits of the right kinds of mitigation policies. Clear, strong, consistent signals from government are needed to encourage both behaviour change and technological development.

All Government organisations should be engaged in certified programmes to meet clearly defined and substantial targets to reduce their GHG emissions. We at Counties Manukau DHB are doing that through the CEMARS programme and have joined up with a wide range of public and private companies to share and learn as we go. There are enormous gains to be made through collaboration in doing this.

Question 6: Other comments

Further information for our government to consider?

Health and wellbeing needs to be at the heart of the government's climate action. We recommend:

- A Parliamentary climate change and health summit.
- Health sector leadership on mitigation and adapting to locked-in climate impacts on health
- Involvement of public health expertise, and Health (including equity) Impact Assessment (HIA) to be routinely undertaken to inform key climate-relevant policies.
- Climate commitments that protect and promote health in the climate-vulnerable Pacific regions.