

## **Submission on targets to address climate change**

### **Inaction to address climate change will have significant costs**

The Government consultation document treats action on climate change as a cost, whereas failure to take action is actually the cost. Treasury found that if New Zealand continues on its current trajectory of increasing emissions, the cost to taxpayers of even a modest 5% reduction target will be up to \$52 billion. The more we lower our emissions the more we will reduce this cost.

Climate change is a threat to our economy and the things it most depends on, like tourism and farming. Our agricultural nation depends on a stable climate. Our farmers will suffer increased droughts and damaging storms and profits will suffer.

The language around the cost to address climate change is damaging as it scares New Zealanders into doing nothing. However, there are many benefits in *investing* in mitigation measures to address climate change. Along with safe and prosperous future where we're all better off, the technological and economic benefits could be huge. Failing to act will cost us and the World Bank warns that the longer action is delayed, the more costs will rise for the next generation. Taking action to cut carbon pollution in New Zealand creates benefits like cleaner air, less dependence on foreign oil, better human health and more liveable cities. Our existing renewable electricity portfolio is an opportunity, not an excuse for inaction. By building on this we can be a positive example to other countries, pioneer solutions the rest of the world needs, and capture new economic opportunities.

Responding to climate change is worth our while. The New Climate Economy Report released in 2014 by a team of internationally renowned economists, led by Lord Nicholas Stern, found that countries can improve their economic performance while cutting emissions. The Chair of the Bank of America, the head of the OECD, the World Bank, the Vice Chair of Deutsche Bank, and many others, endorsed this finding.

### **New Zealand needs a minimum target of 40% emissions reductions by 2030 with the goal of zero carbon dioxide emissions by 2040**

Carbon dioxide is the main driver of long-term climate change. The discussion document highlights that for a good chance of limiting warming to less than 2°C, the world can emit less than one trillion tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> from now on. At current rates of emissions, the world will blow this carbon budget by 2035.

I ask you to adopt a policy of zero CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 2040 with a minimum target of a 40% emissions reduction in net emissions below 1990 levels by 2030 – the minimum contribution required to keep us under 2 degrees global warming.

Regardless of what we do about other emissions from agriculture, which I also think requires serious efforts to be reduced, every country ultimately needs to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions to zero to stop climate change and avoid blowing the global carbon budget.

### **Adaptation is as important as mitigation**

Climate change is already happening and we need to find ways to adapt and become resilient to the impacts. An important aspect of this is stopping development from occurring in vulnerable areas. People are still being allowed to build houses and put vulnerable uses in locations that will be impacted by the effects of climate change, such as coastal areas. This will only led to problems in 20 or 50 years and the economic

and social costs will be a lot higher than if we start restricting development and addressing vulnerabilities now.

Supporting communities to become more resilient is also very important. Knowing and trusting our neighbours, understanding our local environment, having local places to swap and share resources or learn about repairing old equipment, learning about a few vegetables and fruit trees that we can grow organically in our backyards, and having people we can rely on is very important to building resilient communities. Government should be supporting and resources changes in our communities and economies to encourage this.

### **Targets need to be backed up with a credible plan.**

In order to meet our targets we need a credible national strategy for how we can achieve them. Without a clear pathway, targets are just empty numbers. Despite existing targets for 2020 and 2050, New Zealand's emissions have continued to rise. Official projections say they will continue rising under current policies.

The plan should establish yearly emissions targets with the related methods to reduce carbon clearly set out. These should include a shift from fossil fuels to clean energy, using New Zealand's current energy generation through hydro as an excuse to not do more is not good enough. If we are currently producing 70% of our energy through hydro then it should be a lot easier for us to reach a target of 100% renewable energy as we're already most of the way there! Freight and transportation are areas we should focus on. Investment should be made in our rail networks, first for freight, and then to increase passenger services. All subsidies to big business that are not involved in sustainable practices (i.e. mining, agriculture) should be stopped. There should be a policy of polluter pays. Take the subsidies that are given to these industries and put them into investments supporting industries that will help reach our targets, and that will grow new innovative industries.

Education and awareness raising campaigns are essential to reduce household emissions, including the use of building materials that consumers have a say over. New Zealanders can make significant changes in their behaviours, including making reasonable sacrifices to their lifestyle, if they understand why it is important. Take campaigns for smoking, drink-driving, seatbelts, and even reducing dog-poo on the streets! In less than 2 decades there can be a complete turnaround in attitudes to almost an opposite extreme.

We should be focussing on reductions in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and not on 'sinks' such as planting forests, which are a short term measure and do not help with changing the fundamental behaviours that contribute to climate change. If we choose to plant forests to reduce CO<sub>2</sub>, this should be in addition to other methods that already meet our emission reduction targets.

### **We need a climate change law to keep government and business on track.**

The UK Climate Change Act provides a model for government commitment and accountability that New Zealand should adopt. This Act puts national emissions targets in domestic law (which is not the case in New Zealand) and requires every government to produce credible plans to meet these. This will show other countries we are serious. The Act also sets up an independent Climate Commission to advise government on its policies and hold whoever is in power accountable. This makes the issue of climate change less politicised by having an authoritative independent voice in the debate.

There should also be greater stakeholder responsibility. Companies should be required to develop their own sustainability targets, and CEOs should have a greater level of responsibility for meeting these targets.

**We need political parties to work together.**

This issue needs cooperation across the political spectrum and efforts to engage all New Zealanders in the solutions. Climate policy can't go on being a political football with major policy flip-flops every time there's a change in government. We need stable climate policy that steers us clearly towards a zero carbon society. This will allow businesses to make good long-term decisions and New Zealand will benefit by attracting investment in low carbon industries and innovation.

**New Zealand should be a leader, not a follower**

I request that you stop downplaying our responsibility for climate change saying New Zealand is too small to make a difference. It's not in our national character to sit on the fence and watch others get the job done. It's time for us to do the right thing again. We were the first to give women the vote. We stood behind our Pacific neighbours in rejecting nuclear testing. Now's our chance to create a climate plan that New Zealanders can be proud to stand behind, and that starts with a target of reducing emissions by at least 40% by 2030.

New Zealand should also be supporting our Pacific neighbours in providing advice and resources to help these countries develop their own strategies.

**We can't wait**

Delaying action makes it harder to meet our targets and lumps more costs onto young people to deal with in the future. There are many beneficial actions the Government could take now together with businesses and communities to kick-start the transition. Start today.

**Take the people with you**

The public consultation period for this submission was woefully short and poorly advertised. I've seen ads on the T.V. about having my say on the change to the flag, but I've seen nothing about setting climate change targets. We can't expect to be successful in reaching our goals if the New Zealand public haven't been invited on the journey to understand how important reaching these targets are.

**Susannah Goble**