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Climate Change is a natural phenomenon. What is un-natural is the rate at which current changes are happening. It is this speed of change which CAN and MUST be addressed URGENTLY.

Humans have been “at war” with nature since at least the start of the industrial revolution, and probably for hundreds of years before that. Attitudes of taming, controlling, using and abusing the planet’s natural resources have abounded, and global population growth has exacerbated the effects dramatically. A relative newcomer to this scenario, New Zealand has nevertheless gained massively from felling trees, reclaiming wetland, (both removing carbon sinks, altering ecosystems), creating an agricultural economy which produces very significant amounts of “greenhouse gasses”, having a very high per capita use of fossil fuel-reliant transport, and so much more. All this contributes to the anthropological speeding up of Climate Change.

Q1.

(a) Do you agree with the objectives for our contribution?

Costs, benefits and impacts on society need to be managed to protect everyone, especially the most vulnerable. We currently have an economy that encourages people and companies to extract as much short term wealth as they can, from the environment and from their workers, regardless of the damage caused, because they don’t have to pay for it. This also known as “the tragedy of the commons”.

The Government is supposed to help those who need help the most, not those who need it the least.

Management of the anthropological contributors to climate change will need full commitment and input from all countries, all parties, and all people, and over the long term. There is a dire need for a “RESET” of global ambitions to achieve a goal of ecological balance and sustainability, with economic balance being only one of the desired outcomes. Treating nature with respect is a good place to start.

There is a closing window of opportunity for the international community to act in a cohesive and effective way to avert the single, most damaging planetary disaster since humans evolved. Whatever goals, aims, objectives are set now WILL need to change over time as new information and situations arise. However, waiting for other countries to “do their bit” is wasting precious time. We need to demonstrate leadership in action NOW. Let’s set an example for other countries to follow, it’s something we’ve always been good at eg Women’s suffrage, Nuclear Free NZ.

Q2.

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

1. If the global emissions are not addressed promptly there will eventually be no economy to worry about. Delaying action to significantly reduce emissions increases the likelihood that a tipping point will be reached that will make any recovery or control impossible. If that happens, there will be no meaningful economy - in New Zealand, or anywhere else.

2. There are many groups (including some farmers) in NZ who are already embracing technologies and techniques to create a more environmentally sustainable economy. Everyone in NZ needs to be encouraged to follow their example. For too long we've been putting "all our eggs in one basket" by relying so heavily on an unsustainable level of dairying (pardon the mixed metaphor). New Zealand farming needs re-forestation of erosion prone slopes – both for timber production AND as permanent carbon sinks and wildlife habitats; selecting sustainably appropriate land-use (protecting aquatic and thus human life), choice of breeds (animals, grasses etc) which give the best overall result, not necessarily just the highest yield (eg of milk solids). The technologies and techniques are already out there. It seems to take an eternity for these ideas to filter through to the mainstream, and yet they could make SUCH a difference. There's a significant difference between optimizing and maximizing! We need – urgently - to prioritise "optimization".

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?

The cost of doing nothing, or of doing too little, is very much more than ANY cost involved in addressing climate change. The longer we delay meaningful action, the more expensive it will be, and the less likely that we'll be successful in slowing the rate of climate change sufficiently to prevent unmanageable consequences.

As each country has it's own particular set of circumstances, so does each household. eg It is MUCH harder for an already frugal family to achieve a given percentage reduction compared with those who have never made any effort to factor in emission controls. Significant incentives and supports are required for all householders to participate willingly. This is where the government needs to focus on BENEFITS and OPPORTUNITIES. eg subsidies/tax rebates for those who walk, bike or use public transport. Significant encouragement for individuals and businesses to invest in electric vehicles, sustainable energy options, and to reduce all manner of waste and pollution. These would also improve health, quality of life, water quality, cost of living, and more (whilst also improving the economy!). All new buildings should have full insulation, double glazing and PV panels as standard. It would cost a fraction more, but the payback would be well worth it. This would create jobs, support businesses, and cut emissions – especially if more effort was directed into developing retrofit concepts for existing buildings at the same time. PV excess can be used to charge up electric cars, further reducing emissions from fossil fuels.

We need to match or even go beyond the EU pledge of "at least" a 40% reduction on 1990 emissions by 2030 – taking every opportunity to exceed it.

Q4 .

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

Well done for acknowledging that there are opportunities to be found in reducing emissions. However, it's misleading to call them "new" opportunities, since most of them have been around for some time. Successive governments have failed to take advantage of them – and so far, this one is no exception! There will always be something else being developed which is promising – but we have to make a start somewhere. If sufficient government resources are put into educating, encouraging people, and ensuring a reliable supply of affordable (zero-emission) public transport and sustainable, zero-emission energy options, then all of the suggested opportunities could be embraced. However, it must also be made clear that no-one gets subsidies or support to pollute our

country/planet, and everyone gets a living wage. There is no place for massive bonuses in industry and government when there are people on the breadline, graduates unable to find work and parents unable to feed their kids a healthy meal.

All countries have an obligation, both moral and legal, to do whatever we/they can, to lessen the effects of sea-level rise which are already causing havoc for many Pacific atoll dwellers.

Q5.

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

There will always be “future uncertainties of technologies and costs. A target should be a minimum, and our intention not merely to achieve it, but to take advantage of new technologies as they arise to go beyond the target. We need to demonstrate to ourselves and to the world that it’s not a question of “How little can we get away with?” It must be “How much CAN we do to reduce our emissions”? When New Zealand has embraced that philosophy, Kiwis really will have reason to be proud. We can set an example, and a challenge, for other countries to demonstrate similar commitment with their own “best practice”. Only then will this looming disaster be averted.

Thank you for this opportunity to contribute. I hope sincerely that submissions will be taken seriously, especially given the ludicrously short time-frame offered. Compare this with the years of lobbying that the “Big Business Industry” has had to put their spin and short term vested interests to the fore, and you will understand the frustration felt by many contributors.

I hope that New Zealand can show the way in timely and constructive emissions reduction. Let’s not wait until the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris – there’s a lot more we can be doing NOW.