

2015 CLIMATE CHANGE CONTRIBUTION CONSULTATION SUBMISSION

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I'm glad to finally be asked by the government what I think about this issue. However the consultation process is deeply flawed and shows a lack of commitment on the part of the government to truly take into account New Zealanders views on this hugely important issue which will have a dramatic impact on our way of life, whether we take meaningful action to stop runaway climate change or not. We haven't been provided with all the information to allow us to make fully informed submissions on this topic. I'm worried that the government will use this flawed process of consultation as an excuse to set an uninspiring, unambitious target.

We haven't had enough time to input into this process - the consultation meetings were arranged as such extremely short notice and only in a limited number of towns and cities, and the submission timeframe has been far too short to ensure everyone affected has a chance to have their say.

I am disappointed by the consultation document because I don't think it gives a full representation of the situation. It seems to be pushing the opinion that we shouldn't do very much on climate change. The economic modelling in the document is meaningless because it doesn't account for the costs of inaction/the benefits of action. Sure, these things cannot be precisely predicted but it is inconceivable that a reasonable range of estimates for various actions couldn't have been created. If this had been done, it would have clearly shown that taking action on climate change is by far the better option. The model didn't even include forestry, our most promising avenue for reducing net emissions, at least in the short term. There are plenty of savings we will be able to make in other sectors of the economy which will more than pay for any costs associated with reducing emissions.

The document misses out important information and misrepresents things. It fudges the fact that by the time we get to 2030, the difference in economic growth between having no target or a 40% target is miniscule. It also overstates the cost to households to reduce our emissions because it uses a zero emission reduction as a baseline, when actually NZ already has a target of 5% below 1990 levels, so any accounting should start from there, and the fact it doesn't include forestry means the costs are hugely overstated. It doesn't talk about our emissions per capita, which are some of the highest in the world (almost double the EU emissions per capita). Instead it implies that emission reductions in this country will make no difference because we have a small population. These are just some examples of the way the document seems to try to hide our embarrassingly bad record on climate change and to pretend like we don't need to and can't afford to do that much to reduce our emissions. I disagree wholeheartedly.

A couple of years ago I went to an event which was a presentation and panel discussion about climate change aimed at young people. At one point we were asked to put our hands up if we had ever thought about not having children. Nearly half the people in the room, people predominantly my age or younger, put up their hands. I was reminded of this event when I went to one of the climate change consultation public meetings and a middle-aged man stood up and said he wanted action on climate change because he was sick of his daughter saying she's not going to have children because of climate change. That is just devastating, that young people are choosing not to have children (or in some cases are regretting having had them) because of the chaos that potentially awaits due to climate change. I want the government to do everything it can to put this right.

I want New Zealand to make an emissions reduction target at the climate talks in Paris of 40% below 1990 levels by 2030. Yes, this is ambitious, and we won't just be able to snap our fingers and magically meet the target. But to me that doesn't matter. The cost of inaction is far larger than the cost of action. We must have a target which will guide NZ towards the global transition to a zero emissions world. (But a target alone won't get us there, it needs to be backed up by a proper action plan to ensure we meet the target.)

We need to take moral leadership on this problem. The idea that seems to be espoused by this government at the moment is that it is just too hard and too expensive to take any meaningful action. This stance shows absolute moral bankruptcy. By saying it is too expensive to take real action on climate change, what they are really saying is that it is more important to protect the monetary investments of a few people than it is to ensure the survival and wellbeing of our future generations, including those young people and children and babies already born now, who will be bearing the 'costs' (read 'huge global upheaval') of this inaction over their lifetimes. I want us to have a really ambitious target so I, and everyone else of my generation, can have hope for the future.

We are a rich country and have already emitted excessively large amounts of greenhouse gas relative to our population. This means we must rightly make much larger cuts to our emissions than countries which have emitted far less than us in total per-capita in the past. I reject any suggestion that New Zealand is somehow too poor to take bold action, or that we should wait for someone else to take bold action first. We need to do what is right. Other countries will follow our lead. Maybe not immediately, but they will.

Climate change will affect our country. It's happening already – droughts that are affecting farmers, bigger and more frequent storms, food prices increasing because of climate upheaval in other countries – it scares me to think about how much all this is costing us, and how much it's going to cost us as these kinds of things become more and more frequent over the coming years and decades. Even the big storms that hit Wellington recently would have cost our region huge amounts of money in repairs to property and infrastructure. I don't want a future climate that forces me to spend large periods of time for the rest of my life cleaning up after natural disasters that would have been avoided if we had have only take serious action now to stop climate chaos. The emissions we've already put into the atmosphere guarantee some degree of this happening already, I want the government to stop it getting any worse.

It will give us a reason to be proud of our county, instead of having an embarrassing national secret about how we are constantly being shamed on the international stage on our lack of action on climate change, and even that we are blocking action. What if instead of winning 'Fossil of the Day'

awards and the government was quietly pretending it didn't happen, we were winning awards for our strong leadership on this issue? I would be proud to be a New Zealander, and I know so many other people who would be too. It's worth investing in something we can be proud of. Isn't that why the government puts so much money into big international sports events, or deciding on the country's flag? Why not do it for something that's going to improve our chances of a liveable planet over the next century and beyond?

The fact our economy is reliant on agriculture does not mean we should have a lower emission target. We can diversify our agricultural sector beyond dairy. We need to anyway given its other environmental impacts, and a diverse agricultural sector will make us more resilient to price fluctuations of dairy products, so it's win-win-win. Not only that but climate change itself is a threat to farming because of droughts and floods, so putting forward an ambitious emission reduction target which will encourage other countries to take similarly ambitious action, will increase the chances of our farming economy being able to thrive, and diversifying our agricultural sector to reduce emissions will mean we are more resilient to climactic shifts which are going to happen anyway with the climate change that is already locked in. That's two more wins. And of course we don't just have to stick to agriculture, there are heaps of other opportunities to broaden our economy away from agriculture that will reduce our emissions of various greenhouse gases, and reduce our reliance on imported fossil fuels. 'Get off the Grass: Kickstarting New Zealand's Innovation Economy' by Shaun Hendy and Sir Paul Callaghan is full of ideas about this. I suggest the Minister for Climate Change has a read of it.

Not only does New Zealand have high emissions, our economy has high emissions intensity as well, with agriculture being only 4% of the total economy, but being responsible for 48% of our emissions (Treasury Economic and Financial Overview 2013).

To take account of future uncertainties of technologies and costs when setting our target : Buying international carbon credits on the market instead of taking action at home is not a good plan. There are some reasons why it seems good, because it allows us to pay for easy emissions reductions, but actually, we are going to have to make the harder reductions eventually, and the sooner we do that, the cheaper and better it will be in the long run. If we wait until all the easy reductions have been made before starting on harder things, in the meantime we will have build infrastructure that locks in higher emissions. It also means we get the benefits of actually taking action, the reduced health costs from investing in active transport infrastructure for example. If we don't actually make cuts at home our emissions will just continue to rise, leaving my generation with even more costs to absorb, which could be really high, depending on the international price. Also everyone else will be getting ahead of us, because they'll be taking action, like many countries and cities already are. You're protected from fluctuations in international price.

As well as my comments here, I also endorse all six points of the Generation Zero online form submission, at fixourfuture.nz, which many other submitters have used. I have not submitted through that form though to and won't repeat those points here to avoid doubling up.

Climate change is the biggest threat to human health, biodiversity, the stability of our societies, the integrity of our cultures, our way of life. New Zealand needs to take a stand on the world stage for the future of our planet – a stand for taking serious action to stop the worst effects of climate change.