

1 June 2015

Hon. Tim Groser,

Climate change is the biggest issue facing the world today, and I need the New Zealand Government to take responsibility for finding truly workable solutions. Not in some distant future - NOW.

I want them to work with the opposition parties because climate change affects everyone, and we need as many bright minds in the room as possible to find a way forward. It's not just Labour and Green Party supporters who'll be affected - farmers won't be voting for National in 20 years if they do nothing about climate change, because they'll all be going out of business.

The Government's narrow fixation on the short-term costs of taking action is flawed and damaging. This is about *investing* in a safe and prosperous future where we're all better off. 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. 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.

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 CO₂ from now on. At current rates of emissions, the world will blow this carbon budget by 2035. Regardless of what we do about other emissions from agriculture, every country ultimately needs to reduce CO₂ emissions to zero to stop climate change and avoid blowing the global carbon budget. That means shifting from fossil fuels to clean energy and planting forests to absorb carbon.

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. Our international reputation can't survive that much longer - we need real results.

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.

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.

An exciting zero carbon future is waiting for us if we choose it. We need to start building it today. Previous generations didn't understand the gravity of the problem and didn't have the technologies to solve it, but the current generation in charge has neither excuse. 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.

Be brave, National - New Zealand needs you to face up to reality.

Yours sincerely,
Cass Hesom-Williams

