



Setting New Zealand's post-2020 climate change target

Submission form

The Government is seeking views on New Zealand's post-2020 climate change contribution under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

You can have your say by making a submission using this form or using the online tool available at www.mfe.govt.nz/more/consultations.

For more information about this consultation:

- Read our [Consultation on New Zealand's post-2020 international climate change contribution web page](#)
- Read our discussion document: [New Zealand's Climate Change Target: Our contribution to the new international climate change agreement](#)

Submissions close at 5.00pm on Wednesday 3 June 2015.

Publishing and releasing submissions

All or part of any written submission (including names of submitters), may be published on the Ministry for the Environment's website www.mfe.govt.nz. Unless you clearly specify otherwise in your submission, we will consider that you have consented to website posting of both your submission and your name.

Contents of submissions may be released to the public under the Official Information Act 1982 following requests to the Ministry for the Environment (including via email). Please advise if you have any objection to the release of any information contained in a submission and, in particular, which part(s) you consider should be withheld, together with the reason(s) for withholding the information. We will take into account all such objections when responding to requests for copies of, and information on, submissions to this consultation under the Official Information Act.

The Privacy Act 1993 applies certain principles about the collection, use and disclosure of information about individuals by various agencies, including the Ministry for the Environment. It governs access by individuals to information about themselves held by agencies. Any personal information you supply to the Ministry in the course of making a submission will be used by the Ministry only in relation to the matters covered by this consultation. Please clearly indicate in your submission if you do not wish your name to be included in any summary of submissions that the Ministry may publish.

Questions to guide your feedback

Your submission may address any aspect of the discussion document, but we would appreciate you paying particular attention to the questions posed throughout and listed in this form. You may answer some or all of the questions. To ensure your point of view is clearly understood, you should explain your rationale and provide supporting evidence where appropriate.

Contact information

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Objectives for the contribution

1a. We have set the following three objectives for our contribution:

- it is seen as a fair and ambitious contribution – both by international and domestic audiences
- costs and impacts on society are managed appropriately
- it must guide New Zealand over the long term in the global transition to a low emissions world.

Do you agree with these objectives for our contribution?

- Yes
- No

1b. What is most important to you?

We support a minimum 40% reduction in emissions below the 1990 level by 2030 and a commitment to a pathway towards zero CO₂ emissions by 2050 or earlier (alongside reductions in other greenhouse gases). We also want New Zealand to call for a global zero carbon target. The cost of aiming for anything less will be far too high. 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. The people of NZ need to get some understanding of what the real costs of climate change will be. It is not something to be measured in dollars but will be measured in lives lost, number of species becoming extinct, coastlines submerged and foodchains collapsing etc. Although we agree with the objectives above, we are deeply concerned as to who decides and how we decide what is ambitious and what the costs and impacts of our actions or inactions might be. We don't understand the logic behind the stated objective that *"We need to ensure that our contribution is affordable to families and businesses,...."* Trying to keep our emissions target at a level where our contribution is affordable to NZer's is totally the wrong perspective to have on the matter. It only has meaning if we can quantify what the costs of taking no action or inadequate action will be. The real cost we must be looking at is the cost of taking inadequate action. We want the government to act on

climate change as an investment in our future and stop seeing it as a cost to society. It is pointless worrying about the costs to this generation if it means that the cost to future generations is so great that life ceases to be worth living or ceases altogether. We need to set our targets and start working towards them immediately, not wait until 2020. We have prevaricated far too long already.

What would be a fair contribution for New Zealand?

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

We encourage the government to reduce its focus on fairness and redirect it to the critical issue of survival. We must do everything possible to reduce all carbon emissions. We would like to comment on the statement in the discussion document that "The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change notes that *"reducing the emissions of short-lived climate forcing agents [including methane] ... will have only a limited effect on long-term warming, which is driven mainly by carbon dioxide"* This seems to be suggesting that we need to worry less about methane than CO₂. Even though methane is only active for a relatively short time it has a much greater effect than CO₂ during that period. We believe that the IPCC reports are inherently conservative which is understandable when so many scientists from different countries are trying to agree what to include in a report. One area which we believe the IPCC has insufficiently covered is with feedback loops and tipping points. So even though methane emissions are short-lived compared to CO₂ it may be impossible to recover from the damage done by methane during that short time if a tipping point has been passed. This is a critical area that needs to be factored more highly in any decision making if we want to survive. The Global Warming Potential (GWP) of methane is 25. That means over 100 years emissions of 1 million tonnes of methane is equivalent to 25 million tonnes of CO₂. Release of methane from melting of permafrost is a very good example of a feedback loop. This quote is from a recent article - *"Even if society agreed to address climate change immediately, the vast areas covered by permafrost would still face what scientists call "positive feedback". Fossilised organic material - mostly carbon - now encased in permafrost would be released into the environment, in effect greenhouse gas from the ground. This is especially true for north-eastern Siberia, essentially a huge frozen swamp. **We estimate that there's twice as much carbon in the permafrost layers as in the atmosphere now, so we're looking at tripling the carbon dioxide. And that means more warming. It's a cycle,"** Romanovsky says."*

(<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2014/03/climate-change-shifts-earth-alaska-2014327667287787.html>)

As well as methane from permafrost there are huge deposits of methane clathrates in the world's oceans that are being destabilised as ocean temperatures rise. Therefore it is critical that we do everything possible to reduce to zero, global carbon emissions produced by human activities. For NZ this means radical changes in agricultural practices and ceasing oil exploration and fossil fuel use. This needs to be done as soon as possible including planting of trees to avoid reaching a tipping point with natural methane emissions.

How will our contribution affect New Zealanders?

3. What level of cost is appropriate for New Zealand to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions? For example, what do you think would be a reasonable impact on annual household consumption?

See our answer to question 1 above. We have to do whatever needs to be done to keep global temperature rises below 2 degrees. Anything less is failing our children and grandchildren. As we said above it is pointless worrying about the costs to this generation if it means that the cost to future generations is so great that life ceases to be worth living or ceases altogether. We are not going to achieve our targets if we continue under the illusion that we can avoid making major changes in the way we live on this planet.

4. Of the opportunities for New Zealand to reduce its emissions (as outlined on page 15 of the discussion document), which do you think are the most likely to occur, or be most important for New Zealand?

Transport has huge potential for reducing our emissions. Let's stop subsidising Rio Tinto and the aluminium smelter and let them go elsewhere. The renewably supplied energy saved can be used to have a concerted effort to get our vehicle fleets running on electricity. The recent announcements by Kiwi Ian Wright of Tesla fame, about the electric powertrains that they have developed for trucks is very encouraging. We need to move more people and goods on electric trains and expand our electric powered rail network. We need to stop looking for more oil particularly in our surrounding seas and focus on moving to a zero carbon economy. 80% of known fossil fuels deposits need to be left in the ground if we are to have any chance of meeting our global target of keeping warming to less than 2 degrees. NZ needs to be a leader and not a follower. We have the resources both human and natural to do this. It is not in our interest to sit back and say we must wait for other bigger and more powerful nations to act first. We are running out of time to act and need to lead by example. We believe there should be a concerted effort to reduce NZ's livestock numbers by converting to sustainable farming practices that have lower contributions of greenhouse gases. We do not support any mitigation of livestock emissions using GE. We support any initiatives to increase our permanently forested areas, which has the added benefits of improved erosion control and water quality.

Summary

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

We should not let it distract us from the target. Be brave, have faith that if we work together we can do great things and aim high for our children's sake. Time is short. We have been talking about what actions to take for decades. It is time to stop talking and act.

Other comments

6. Is there any further information you wish the Government to consider? Please explain.

NZ has led before on important matters such as giving women the vote and taking a nuclear free position. Taking action to reduce our carbon emissions and doing everything we possibly can to contribute to the task at hand is essential. There are many on this planet that are severely distracted by poverty, war, inequality etc. We live on one planet and no one can escape the reality that everything is interconnected. It has been suggested that because our emissions are so small in the world context that we can wait for others to act. This is missing the point. We are all in this boat together and because NZ is such a blessed

nation in so many ways we can afford to step out and lead by example. We believe that it is essential that we have climate law introduced that holds the government of the day accountable for reducing emissions. We support the establishment of an Independent Climate Commission. We also believe that the Government needs to establish a cross-party climate working group. Our response to climate change is far too important to be bogged down in political point scoring and immature and embarrassing behaviour in our Parliament. We believe that there is a need for ongoing discussion and education to keep NZ'ers informed about the latest research, and to help those who are uncertain or sceptical to understand the urgency of the situation we are faced with.

When your submission is complete

Email your completed submission to climate.contribution@mfe.govt.nz or post to Climate Change Contribution Consultation, Ministry for the Environment, PO Box 10362, Wellington 6143.

Submissions close at 5.00pm on Wednesday 3 June 2015.