



SUBMISSION to the Ministry for the Environment on Setting New Zealand's Post-2020 Climate Change Target 4 June 2015

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COMMISSION STATEMENT

The Justice and Peace Commission of the Catholic Diocese of Auckland addresses issues of justice, peace and integrity of creation from the perspective of Catholic social teaching. We welcome this opportunity to make a submission on New Zealand's climate targets in view of the upcoming UNFCCC meetings in Paris.

COMMISSION RESPONSES TO OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS SET BY THE MINISTRY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

MFE OBJECTIVE 1: The contribution is seen as a fair and ambitious contribution – both by international and domestic audiences

COMMISSION: New Zealand's contribution should not only be *seen* as fair and ambitious, but more importantly *it SHOULD ACTUALLY BE fair and ambitious*. In other words, it should take a long-term view of what is best for future generations, have a broad foresighted view of the social and environmental consequences of NOT acting fairly and ambitiously, and show a willingness to take meaningful action for the benefit of the common good. By 'acting for the common good' is meant acting for the good of all in New Zealand and on our planet, especially the vulnerable and poor, and those who are and will be most affected by climate change.

MFE OBJECTIVE 2: The costs and impacts on society are managed appropriately.

COMMISSION: When we speak of a contribution that is affordable, we should take care to ask not only what the costs are of today's preventative actions e.g., changing to more renewable energy – but also what the costs would be to us if we do NOT prevent further climate change, e.g., relocation or constant flooding of our coastal cities and towns, fighting new pests and diseases which may threaten our agriculture and health systems, and so on. With this balance in mind, what appear to be costs today will be better understood as long-term investments in a viable future.

MFE OBJECTIVE 3: The contribution must guide New Zealand over the long term in the global transition to a low emissions world.

COMMISSION: Plans for transition to a zero-emissions (carbon-neutral) world are critical for New Zealand and our world. Our country has already displaced thousands of jobs and production of many household items and clothing overseas through its short-sighted economic policies. Planning for a carbon-neutral society can help redress this by encouraging – through education and regulation – sustainable and local production of food, clothing and manufactured goods.

MFE QUESTION 2. What would be a fair contribution for New Zealand? What do you think the nature of New Zealand's emissions and economy means for the level of the target that we set?

COMMISSION:

2.1 We would like to acknowledge the difficulties faced by New Zealand planners and decision makers, and the complexities of the options they face, especially in light of factors beyond our control, or unknown at this point in time.

2.2 While it is true that our emissions profile is different from other countries because of the large contribution of our agricultural sector, we believe there is still room for much improvement in each sector. We also feel that if targets are set, and given education and reasonable regulation, New Zealanders can and will rise to the challenge.

2.3 Addressing each sector contributing carbon emissions:

a) Many **industries** overseas have become carbon neutral – and so could industry here – through a combination of the use of renewable energy and if necessary, emissions offsets – particularly in reforestation - either in NZ or overseas.

b) Transport alone offers many areas for emissions reductions, and this requires looking at transport from a perspective of a global reduction in emissions:

- subsidy of and building up public transport, especially in cities like Auckland
- encouraging community gardens and home gardens to save on transport of fresh produce
- incentives to manufacturers to return to New Zealand so that more goods are made here and do not require shipping (looking just at the sources of our clothes and canned foods, we have a lot of room to reduce emissions here)
- encouraging a 'New Zealand made' label so citizens would support their local producers instead of buying so many overseas products

- bringing on biofuels in a sustainable way.

c) Carbon emissions from **energy** production should be capped and then gradually reduced to zero. We know that globally we need to leave most of our remaining fossil fuels in the ground to stay even close to a 2°C rise in global temperature. New Zealand should set targets for stopping coal mining and oil and gas exploration, and for the phasing-out the use of these fuels as renewables like wind, solar and biofuels are able to replace them.

d) Zero-**waste** goals should be set by every municipality in the country. To aid this, further education and some incentives and/or regulation of industry and individuals for recycling, product packaging, composting etc are needed. Methane emissions from waste are avoidable if organic materials are properly composted rather than left to rot anerobically in landfills.

e) Emissions from **agriculture** are our biggest challenge, and it is very true that the world's population will need ever more food as population grows and as climate change wreaks havoc with crop production in other countries. To lower local and global carbon emissions, land use within the agricultural sector needs to encourage more food plant production and less animal production. Production of food protein from plants takes far less land and water (with no methane emission) than production of food protein from animals – especially cattle. While we are not suggesting that everyone become vegan or vegetarian, we do suggest that a diet with less meat and dairy and more legumes is not only healthier for individuals, but also for the planet. We make this recommendation of a shift in agricultural production while recognising that some of our agricultural land can support grazing or forestry, but not production of human food plants. To this end, we would support a land inventory of the kind Canada has, which reserves the best agricultural land for growing grains, legumes, vegetables and fruits, and some animal feed, while more marginal agricultural land can be used for grazing or forestry. Agricultural land reserves also prevent high value agricultural lands from being used for development other than for suitable food production.

2.4 We applaud the contributions to agricultural research made by our government, and the efficiencies our farmers have achieved, and we encourage further investment in research.

2.5 Reforestation should continue to be actively encouraged and pursued, both on crown and private lands. Lands already in forest should be replanted immediately after cutting unless these are deemed high value for agriculture. Anyone who travels throughout the country notices that there is much marginal grazing land (with steep slopes or fragile soils) which should be reforested rather than allowed to continue to erode. Incentives to farmers to permanently reforest such lands could be part of an overall carbon emissions management plan.

2.6 As a developed country, and as one which has contributed to climate change more than developing countries, New Zealand has a responsibility to reduce its emissions for the common good of all, and at a faster rate than developing countries should be expected to. We believe that all citizens should be encouraged to take individual responsibility for the way in which they consume. Better education, such as that provided by ECCA's TV campaign on energy efficiency, would go a long

way to introduce Kiwis to more sustainable ways of living. Individual and corporate change will need some regulation as well, as a part of an overall framework for transition to a carbon-neutral future.

MFE QUESTION 3. How will our contribution affect New Zealanders? 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?

COMMISSION:

3.1 We believe that the current New Zealand target of reducing emissions to 5 percent below 1990 levels is woefully inadequate. Our emissions should be on a trajectory toward zero by 2050 – an achievable goal. The impact (reduction in consumption per household) of a target of 40 percent below 1990 levels is only a marginal additional impact on household consumption, compared with overall consumption, as shown in Table 1 of the Ministry’s Discussion Document.

3.2 Compared with the medium term and long term dangers and costs of a world whose average temperature increases by 4°C, the short term costs of becoming carbon neutral by 2050 are much more easily borne. Thus we would support an interim target of a 40 percent reduction on 1990 levels by 2027.

3.3 We believe New Zealanders need to be faced with the predicted environmental, social and economic consequences of an overheated world – flooded coastal areas; permanent drought in Canterbury and parts of Waikato; increased insect and disease outbreaks from tropical pests moving southward – affecting agriculture and human health; hundreds of millions of climate refugees world-wide needing land to resettle themselves; ocean acidification causing failure of ocean fisheries; continued intense and frequent cyclones, tornadoes, rainstorms and heat waves and more. The science is clear from IPCC reports, and the economic implications of unchecked climate disaster are far worse than if we enact preventative measures now (2006 *Stern Review* and 2012-2014 *Turn Down the Heat* reports from the World Bank). Well-presented and well-dispersed knowledge is essential for informed public participation and decision-making.

MFE QUESTION 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?

COMMISSION:

4.1 We fully support moves toward environmental sustainability, including those opportunities mentioned in the Discussion document. Major moves toward public transport will be critical in cities, particularly Auckland – especially with its predicted population increase in coming decades. Encouragement of walking and cycling are to be encouraged everywhere – and will be also made easier with the implementation of plans like the Auckland Unitary Plan, which will see more suburban areas near train lines become medium to high density residential areas. If biofuels can be produced sustainably, then their use for long-distance travel is to be supported. And if new battery technology can provide electric cars which are more sustainable (including their production), that technology is to be encouraged as well.

4.2 Overall, we are convinced that the long term social, economic and environmental benefits of moving toward a carbon-neutral world far outweigh the short term costs. We encourage the

Government to be bold and courageous in putting forward a contribution to the Paris climate talks that is fair for all people globally, and for future generations.

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

COMMISSION:

New Zealand should be optimistic about the way new employment opportunities will emerge, about the creative response of New Zealanders when faced with challenge, and about the development of some technologies to meet challenges we face. It should be realistic, however, that technology will not be a magic bullet, and be clear that short term costs and changes across some sectors will be necessary for the long term benefit – and indeed, survival – of all.

We would support a Climate Change Act which would be comprehensive in its targets and plans toward a carbon-neutral society, and the establishment of an independent Commission which would see the changes through over several decades and changing governments.

Thank you for this opportunity to contribute to New Zealand's future.