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Submission on setting New Zealand's post-2020 climate change target

Dear sir/madam

By now you have probably read hundreds of submissions asking that the government be more ambitious and responsible when setting a target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Your consultation document indicates that the ministry believes 5% is an ambitious target, and outlines in considerable detail why New Zealand is a special case, and why we as a country should not set a higher target, a target more in line with many other developed countries. And yet the scientific reality and moral imperative suggest we should be working much harder to reduce emissions.

As you are no doubt aware, there is overwhelming evidence that current global emissions have us on track for a 5-degree celcius temperature increase this century, and that such a temperature increase would be catastrophic for human civilisation, and result in the extinction of many species. If you are unsure of the scientific evidence, then I strongly suggest you consult with any number of credible sources. I understand Dr David Wratt now works for the ministry and is one of New Zealand's top climate scientists. Or you could go right to the top and read the IPCCs fifth assessment report. Whichever credible source you turn to will make it clear that the current path we are on is untenable, and that a developed country like New Zealand, with one of the highest emissions per capita, needs to adopt a more ambitious target than 5%.

We would like to make just a few clear recommendations, as we are sure you have many submissions to read.

Recommendations.

1. New Zealand adopt a 20% reduction by 2020 target, and an 80% reduction by 2050 target.
2. That when consulting on these targets, officials impartially present the benefits as well as the costs of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. In our opinion the Ministry has not done this during the consultation period.
3. That New Zealand includes agriculture along with all other sectors in its GHG reduction policies.
4. That the New Zealand government clearly explains the science of climate change to the public, before and during the process of implementing climate change policy. And that the science used should only come from credible

sources, such as Dr David Wratt, Sir Peter Gluckman, the NZ Royal Society, and the IPCC.

5. That the targets are backed up by a clear plan of how to achieve them, and that policy is implemented quickly and in a way that guarantees continual cuts in GHG's by increasing the cost of emitting every year. It must be clear that emissions need to come down for decades, and there will be no back tracking. It is important that businesses understand this. That they can rely on the cost of emissions increasing, so as to incentivise the changes necessary to achieve long term reductions that will eventually be permanent.
6. To ensure permanent emissions reductions, we recommend that the government strives to reach a cross party agreement.

Throughout the process of setting targets and writing policy, all those involved must keep the scientific facts at the forefront of their minds. Without clearly understanding what is at stake if emissions are not significantly reduced, the targets and policy will inevitably fall short of what is required. It is clear that this must not happen, and New Zealand must not shirk its responsibility to join the international task of meeting the 2-degree target set at Copenhagen in 2009.

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Kennett
Director
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