Consultation on setting New Zealand’s post-2020 climate change target

Copy of your submission

Contact information

Name Sharon Lequeux

Organisation (if applicable)

Address

Telephone

Email

Objectives for the contribution

Do you agree with these objectives for our contribution? Yes

1b. What is most important to you?
That we drastically decrease our greenhouse gas emissions as quickly as possible.

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?
New Zealand must commit to a pathway towards zero CO2 emissions by 2050 or earlier (alongside reductions in other greenhouse gases). There is no reason why we could not become 100% renewable in our generation of energy. We could decrease our transport emissions by phasing out the combustion engine (e.g. by increasing petrol tax and providing the infrastructure required for electric vehicles), expanding public transport (locally and between cities) and creating cycle friendly cities. We should also seek to diversify our economy and rely less on Primary agriculture. Compared to other sectors, primary agriculture does not create many (particularly not high paying) jobs, is low return and very environmentally destructive (pollution, land clearing, water usage). Even if climate change were not an issue it would benefit New Zealand to move toward secondary or tertiary production. Producers of industrial food commodities (e.g. milk powder) get low prices and capture very little of the value chain - most of the value is added in the processing and retailing.

How will our contribution affect New Zealanders?

3. What level of cost is appropriate for New Zealand to reduce it's greenhouse gas emissions? For example, what would be a reasonable reduction in annual household consumption?
Implementing a 'polluter pays' system would be the fairest way to cover the cost of reducing our emissions, while encouraging producers to decrease their emissions. The revenue generated from a tax on greenhouse emissions could be returned to businesses and families, or invested in research and infrastructure. It does not 'cost' New Zealand to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions as the real cost would be inaction. Treasury found that if New Zealand continues on its current trajectory of increasing emissions, the cost to taxpayers of even a modest 5% reduction target will be up to $52 billion. Rather than spending this money to meet international obligations we would be better off reducing this cost by lowering our emissions, which would also improve our lifestyle and leave us better prepared for the future.

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?
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As above:
There is no reason why we could not become 100% renewable in our generation of energy. We could decrease our transport emissions by phasing out the combustion engine (e.g. by increasing petrol tax and providing the infrastructure required for electric vehicles), expanding public transport (locally and between cities) and creating cycle friendly cities. We should also seek to diversify our economy and rely less on Primary agriculture. Compared to other sectors, primary agriculture does not create many (particularly not high paying) jobs, is low return and very environmentally destructive (pollution, land clearing, water usage). Even if climate change were not an issue it would benefit New Zealand to move toward secondary or tertiary production. Producers of industrial food commodities (e.g. milk powder) get low prices and capture very little of the value chain - most of the value is added in the processing and retailing.

Summary

5. How should New Zealand take into account the future uncertainties of technologies and costs when setting its target?
The cost of setting up infrastructure is only going to increase as time goes on, therefore we should try to prepare ourselves for peak oil and climate change as quickly as possible. The precautionary principle compels us to act now. Risks of further delay are very high, while we have good certainty about potential short to medium term gains of well-designed emissions reductions policies. We need government to give clear, strong, consistent signals to spur both behavioral change and technological development.

Other comments

6. Is there any further information you wish the Government to consider? Please explain.
It was deeply embarrassing when New Zealand pulled out of the Kyoto Protocol (particularly as it was the same day that Australia committed). Climate change is bigger than politics and if we are going to avoid an increase of more than 2°C then all countries are going to have to work together. I am tired of hearing excuses about some countries produce more emissions than us - it doesn't make it OK for us to behave poorly too. It is easier for us to take action on climate change than for most other countries, so if we don't, how can we expect other countries to? Larger countries need smaller countries to look toward as models or test cases. We are well set up with a small population and many resources at our disposal - we have the potential to be a world leader when it comes to moving to a low emission economy. This would only compliment our 'clean, green' brand.