

## Climate Change Contribution Consultation

From:  
Don Murray

Phone

Dear Mr Groser

I have read the MfE discussion document and attended one of your Ministry's public consultation meetings. I am moved by the large numbers of young people deeply concerned about the anthropomorphic climate changes we are already seeing and their desire for change. You start your forward to the consultation document by saying that "...all countries need to contribute to reducing emissions." And that "to date, action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions across the world has not been strong enough." This is certainly the case for our country.

I am a parent and a grandparent and have worked with children, young people and their families both in paid employment as an educator and in various voluntary roles for the last half century. My scientist friends have been telling me for years what scientists I have read in many fields are saying about this issue and what the 2009 Nobel Laureate Symposium called "The fierce urgency of now". I believe it is time for us in New Zealand to make the change and set an emissions target for New Zealand that the environment can afford.

All politicians need to listen to the need for this change. We must not hide behind our privileged position or our current unusual emissions profile for a developed country. All countries have deeply challenging changes to make and we can best advocate for those by acknowledging and committing to make our own.

I take the introduction at its word; that you want to understand what is most important to me as you decide on our country's contribution. A resilient, ecologically sound NZ economy by the time my youngest grandchild is 50years old – in 49 years time is the answer to that question. To achieve that I ask that New Zealand adopts a **minimum target of a 40% emissions reduction** in net emissions below 1990 levels by 2030 – the minimum required to keep us under 2 degrees global warming. I want all New Zealand politicians to work together to help other countries by showing the world how we can plan for the more ambitious target of achieving **zero carbon emissions by 2050**.

Here are my answers to your questions.

**Question 1:** (a) **Yes**, I agree with the three objectives outlined for our contribution. I believe it is urgent for you to " provide a clear signal to New Zealand businesses and households<sup>1</sup>". I also believe that **the caveat offered in that paragraph is not a justification for delay** or for a reduced target, **but** rather a reason to expect accommodation from other countries and from foreign corporates in any trade deals or agreements. I do agree that our emissions should not be displaced offshore and note that the purchase of cheaper, offshore carbon credits is in fact just that – a displacement of our emissions rather than a real reduction.

---

<sup>1</sup> New Zealand's Climate Change Target: Our contribution to the new international climate change agreement – Discussion Document, New Zealand Government 2015, p7

**Question 1:** (b) Most important to me, is that the true **cost of emissions is shifted to where it lies**, perhaps through an emissions tax. This can achieve fairness by shifting some tax from income to carbon and climate changing gas emissions, both domestically and internationally as well as intergenerationally. It acknowledges the efforts and circumstances of low emitters and counts the cost of what has been until now and externality for some transnational corporations.

**Question 2:** I believe that like every other country, **New Zealand should be looking forward to a “zero carbon” economy in the longer term.** The pattern of development of our economy and emissions profile during my adult lifetime and especially since 1990 as confirmed in chapter 2 of the discussion document<sup>2</sup> shows **the urgent and critical need for a change of direction and emphasis.** I applaud the research efforts to develop new knowledge in agriculture<sup>3</sup>, but believe that although we might be able to benefit ourselves and other countries from them, we cannot rely on any particular outcome. We **must start some changes now.** Further I believe we should be encouraging permanent forest sinks and new clean technologies at home as well as abroad<sup>4</sup>.

Every country has “difficulties”. New Zealand’s are just different and rather than bemoaning our 80% renewable electricity generation, we should be celebrating our good fortune and working on the remaining 20% with wind, solar and tidal technologies.

Our plan must include reducing our importation of fossil fuels, to rely more on electricity for transport (both public and private) and eliminating fossil fuels from heating and stationary uses generally. Transport between Auckland and Wellington and other major routes should be changed to high speed electric rail. Our agriculture must change because there is very little difference between a one off emission of carbon dioxide and a continuous supply of mainly methane to the atmosphere. All industrial processes and products should be audited to make each as carbon neutral as possible.

**Question 3:** I want and believe **we must plan for the 40% reduction target**<sup>5</sup> over the next fifteen years, both to become skilful in the new changed economy with advantages for leadership and in selling services to other countries, and to provide a healthier, resilient, ecologically sound NZ economy in the longer term.

**Question 4:** I believe **all of the opportunities** outlined in this section have the potential to occur as part of a changed economy, but that they will be **dependant** on changes in **strategic government choices** and policy directions<sup>6</sup>. Corporates and the NZ government could kick-start the development of infrastructure for the support of emission free transport by changing their vehicle fleets to electric, with tax and rebate incentives such as exempting electric vehicles from road user charges<sup>7</sup>.

Responding to climate change is worth our while. The New Climate Economy Report released in 2014<sup>8</sup> by a team of internationally renowned economists, led by Professor

---

<sup>2</sup> Ibid 1, p8

<sup>3</sup> Ibid 1, box4 p10

<sup>4</sup> Ibid 1, box 5 p11, p16the Permanent Forest Sink Initiative

<sup>5</sup> Ibid 1, table 1 p14

<sup>6</sup> Ibid 1, some of this is outlined in box9 p15

<sup>7</sup> Ibid p16

<sup>8</sup> <http://newclimateeconomy.report/>

Lord Nicholas Stern<sup>9</sup>, found that countries can improve their economic performance while cutting emissions. The Chair of the Bank of America, the head of the OECD, the World Bank, the Vice Chair of Deutsche Bank, and many others, endorsed this finding.

At present the NZETS<sup>10</sup> is failing to reduce emissions in New Zealand. As a policy tool it is not working and is effectively displacing the cost of our emissions. We need policies to actively reduce emissions. At present climate change is still being treated as an externality. If a review of our ETS fails to take account of this it is not going to be effective. To quote Stern:

*"Climate change is a result of the greatest market failure the world has seen. The evidence on the seriousness of the risks from inaction or delayed action is now overwhelming. The problem of climate change involves a fundamental failure of markets: those who damage others by emitting greenhouse gases generally do not pay."*<sup>11</sup>

**Question 5:** There are **two things** I believe should be done both in setting and implementing our target and in accounting for the certainties and uncertainties.

- I ask you **to commit to** a nation wide education programme in schools, the media and local communities to **help all New Zealanders understand** the enormity of climate change, its threat to our economy and the need for radical change. I believe that your government is no longer in denial about the reality of anthropomorphic climate change, but that many are still trading on the uncertainties, seeing it as a cost to be avoided or personally minimised as much as possible, avoiding the need for us to change, whereas the certainty is that failure to take action is actually the cost. The more and sooner we lower our emissions the more we will reduce this cost.
- I request that you **stop downplaying our responsibility for climate change** by saying New Zealand is too small to make a difference or that we are different from other developed economies or that our agricultural emissions are relatively more efficient than others. It's not in our national character to sit on the fence and watch others get the job done.

I ask you to create a preferably cross party, **climate plan that New Zealanders can be proud to stand behind, and that starts with a target of reducing emissions by at least 40% by 2030**. There are many groups ready to offer specific local and national suggestions. I suggest you set up a commission to hear from these people and to plot a way forward that takes account of the many important points raised in your consultation document.

I ask this for our children and grandchildren and for you to make it possible for every New Zealander to make the personal changes necessary for us to live more sustainably.

Every good wish  
Don Murray

---

<sup>9</sup> For instance . [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicholas\\_Stern,\\_Baron\\_Stern\\_of\\_Brentford](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicholas_Stern,_Baron_Stern_of_Brentford)

<sup>10</sup> Ibid 1, p16

<sup>11</sup> Alison Benjamin (29 November 2007). "[Stern: Climate change a 'market failure'](#)". London: Guardian. Retrieved 29 October 2013.