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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<tr>
<td>Organisation (if applicable)</td>
<td>New Zealand Antarctic Youth Council</td>
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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?

This NZAYC has two primary concerns:

- Irreversible loss of the West Antarctic Ice Sheet. We aim to raise awareness of issue in New Zealand and the impacts it will have on our livleyhood.
- New Zealand’s standing in the international community as an example of quality stewardship in the Antarctic region.

We know that our current emissions trajectory will result in collapse of the West Antarctic Ice Sheet and contribute to global sea-level rise of at least 1 metre by 2100. Sea-level rise of this magnitude in NZ will result in one in 100 year floods becoming annual events. The status quos will not help
manage the risks associated with sea-level rise and changing ocean currents and their implications on society and the NZ economy.

Where we chose to set the NZ CCT will send an influential message internationally and domestically about our countries commitment to sustainable policy and stewardship of not only our country but Antarctica as well.

This presents an excellent opportunity to:

- Present NZ as an example of best environmental practice on the world stage
- Create a domestic drive for quality policy that leads to awareness and supported sustainable practices for individuals and businesses
- Introduce a changing era where sustainability is incorporated in all decisions across the public sector

We are aware under our current strategy our emissions continue to rise. We agree New Zealand needs to support a fair and ambitious emission reduction plan internationally and commit to ambitious emission reductions in New Zealand. Our current strategy will not help manage the risks associated with sea-level rise and changing ocean currents and their implications on society.

**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?**

The IPCC report suggests we need to rapidly reduce our greenhouse gas emissions in the next 5 – 10 years if we are to stay below the 2 degree threshold, we need to consider long term changes to the planet. Without a serious and ambitious pledge we are committing ourselves to complete loss of the West Antarctic Ice Sheet over the coming centuries. Within the next 10 years are we prepared to commit the earth to irreversible changes over the coming centuries?

If we are to commit the earth to significant changes in the global climate are we prepared to pay large costs for adaptation strategies in the future? NZ plays a role internationally as a supplier into the food industry but we have further potential to diversify and build our standing as a country willing to invest in our environment.

This is an opportunity to provide a long term target and commitment to the environment that will span political regimes. This will allow for long term policy to be created, supported and implemented successfully. We are aware the make up of NZ’s emissions is unique and difficult to tackle given our economy’s reliance on agriculture which produces high emissions. This makes the need for the domestic policy surrounding this area complex and open to political pressures. Setting the target at a reasonably ambitious height will commit the government to applying a high level of resource and capability to designing and implementing a policy scheme. Policy that helps our domestic industries such as farming and forestry reduce their emissions in a way that mitigates the cost to the business or individual. The current Emissions Trading Scheme is undermined by the exemption of specific industries and we hope setting an ambitious target will lead to domestic policy with a higher impact.

**How will our contribution affect New Zealanders?**
3. What level of cost is appropriate for New Zealand to reduce it greenhouse gas emissions? For example, what do you think would be a reasonable impact on annual household consumption?

While economic growth is important, long term risks and future costs from climate-related events such as flood and drought are not considered in the MfE discussion document. These costs are currently unknown but will be significantly higher than $1,800 per annum. Therefore, we believe a target of 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2030 or earlier is the most practical target. As we have expressed earlier in the submission, a high commitment internationally will flow through to quality domestic schemes. Policy that is forward looking will provide opportunity to individuals and businesses to adjust their practices and make decisions accordingly and within supportive frameworks provided by the public sector. There will be a transition for businesses and households in coming decades. NZ’s CCT is an opportunity for this transition to be anticipated and supported.

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?

The most likely opportunities for New Zealand are reducing transport emissions through the uptake of electric vehicles and an increased use of public transport. Additionally, social well-being is not solely driven by economy and the enhancement of carbon sequestration through planting forestry in New Zealand will lead to improved health, and sustainability in all levels of community. This illustrates that slowing economic growth and household incomes may not mean a decrease in quality of life.

The crown owns almost half of the land in New Zealand. Given the impact forestry has on our emissions this asset provides an accessible opportunity for change. The uncertainties around ownership and changes to legal structures in the future make forecasting in this area difficult. As we have suggested earlier these change risks can be mitigated through long term commitment to domestic policy off the back of a high NZ CCT.

The consultation document outlines agriculture as a difficult but important area to tackle. An opportunity not touched on in the document is the weight iwi hold within the agriculture/forestry industries and the value they place on tangatawhenua (stewardship of the land). There are opportunities to be maximised in light of the growing relationship between iwi and the crown. Iwi’s growing business interests lead to an agriculture industry with business owners who are entrenched commitment to taking care of the land.

Summary

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

Electric vehicles technologies are already viable and available, but, New Zealand currently lack the incentives and charging stations to embrace and utilise the opportunity. New Zealand needs to embrace new technologies and incentivise them through business buy-in and individuals.
While there is uncertainty in future costs, inaction or business as usual emissions like we are currently doing will cost substantially more than ambitious emission reductions strategies with short term loss of GDP.

Future government strategies will be heavily influenced by where we set the CCT. NZ needs to fully understand and recognise the consequences of forecasting the effects of policy changes in such a developing world. Uncertainties such as technological advances and land use rules will be affected by the target. As we have argued earlier a higher target will lead to greater commitment by future governments to reducing emissions. This can be seen in the quality of an emissions scheme; commitment to research and development and the weight sustainable environmental practices have when developing land use rules.

Other comments

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

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.