1 June 2015

Climate Change Contribution Consultation
Ministry for the Environment
PO Box 10362
Wellington 6143

Nga mihi nui kia koutou katoa – Greetings

Re: Submission on Climate Change Contribution Consultation

This submission refers to the Ministry for Environment Discussion Document on New Zealand’s Climate Change Target.

Nga Whaea Atawhai o Aotearoa Sisters of Mercy New Zealand is a Catholic religious congregation of vowed women. We are engaged in the works of Mercy with our companions in mission throughout New Zealand and in Samoa and Tonga.

The Sisters of Mercy are part of a global Mercy network. Over nine thousand sisters, together with thousands of associates and co-workers minister around the world (forty four countries) in health, education, social justice, spirituality, advocacy and care for the environment. Mercy Global Action at the United Nations in New York, where we have one full time person and two interns, is a project of the worldwide Sisters of Mercy.

As Sisters of Mercy we welcome this opportunity to comment on New Zealand’s contribution to lowering emissions which is a significant issue for the health and wellbeing of the environment. As Sisters in Aotearoa, we have a commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, to act as responsible guardians to whenua and voice our concerns on environmental issues now and in the future.

Climate Change Contribution Consultation

Objectives for the Contribution

Objective One: It is seen as a fair and ambitious contribution both by international and domestic audiences.
We applaud your focus to have our contribution be seen as fair and ambitious. With that in mind, our contribution needs to reflect our commitment to the peoples of Aotearoa New Zealand and our closest and most vulnerable neighbours in the Pacific. Thus, our contribution needs to be significant. It must reflect a stance of solidarity and commitment in lowering emissions, regardless of what other developed nations are doing.

Objective Two: Costs and impacts on society are managed appropriately.

It is concerning that your discussion document ‘New Zealand’s Climate Change Target’ did not extensively highlight the costs, benefits and impacts of climate change to New Zealand. The document only focused on climate change from an economic viewpoint, and that viewpoint was on that of the householder. There was no reference in your document to the environmental and health cost of climate change if nothing was done. There was also no mention of the benefits of any possible action taken. If you want to be fair to the public of New Zealand on the issue of climate change – all costs, impacts and benefits need to be explored and shown to the public.

Objective Three: It must guide New Zealand over the long term in the global transition to a low emissions world.

We applaud your focus of bringing New Zealand into a low emissions world. With that in mind, careful scrutiny of all our actions is needed in lowering our emissions. For example, halting exploration of fossil fuels; if you were to ‘unlock’ and place onto the global market more fossil fuels you then create a problem of more emissions occurring somewhere else in the world which will affect us with more extreme weather events. To commit to a low emissions world, we have to keep the fossil fuels in the ground.

What would be a fair contribution for New Zealand?

The level of contribution to which New Zealand must commit needs to reflect the objectives mentioned above. With that mind, we need to aim for a target that is at least 40% below 1990 levels. All of New Zealand needs to work together on this. We have the technology to reduce emissions, particularly agricultural emissions. Investment and incentives are needed that have the primary focus of lowering emissions. Businesses that do not reflect a culture of lowering emissions need to have penalties and costs placed upon them.

How will our contribution affect New Zealanders?

Our contribution will affect New Zealanders, but the true costs and benefits will not be known until the Government looks extensively at all costs, impacts and benefits and releases this information to the public. New Zealanders will be prepared to make sacrifices as long as all the information is there in front of them in a clear, open and transparent way.

If the Government invests in technologies that help us transition into a low emissions world then our voice on the global stage will be significant. New Zealand and New Zealanders have always had a reputation of being hard workers, risk takers and innovators. This is an opportunity for the New Zealand Government to remind the world of this reputation by leading from the front.
Conclusion

Nga Whaea Atawhai o Aotearoa Sisters of Mercy New Zealand speaks for ethical commitment to integrity of the environment, and is pleased to contribute to the decision-making involved in setting New Zealand’s post-2020 climate change contribution.

With respect

Susan J. France
Sr Sue France
Congregation Leadership Team

BE Crisp
Sr Bridget Crisp
Mercy Global Action, New Zealand
bridget.crisp@xtra.co.nz
Phone: 027 601 4174 / 09 580 0027