

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



Copy of your submission

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Objectives for the contribution

Do you agree with these objectives for our contribution? No

1b. What is most important to you?

Leadership from the Government and parliament on this issue. The science is clear, the outcomes of too little action severe. The Prime Minister agrees that climate change is real and caused (mostly) by Humans. The electorate is mostly scientifically illiterate and cannot make good long term decisions on this issue without leadership. Leaders need to lead and act based on the science. If we take the current course of public opinion polling we can never make progress with reform until it is too late. Government must take an active role in laying out the probable future for the next 50, 100 and 500 years to the public. The choices must be laid out to the electorate. Descriptions of the problem need to include the narrow, short term costs (already being done) but also the externalities (like the real cost of fossil fuels) and the moral dimension (how can we carry on and lay all the costs at the door step of future generations) and the ecological dimension (mass extinction). All these are to a degree interrelated. An example is the countless trillions of dollars that 1-2m sea level rise will cost the world. (and even that ignores the fact that sea levels could continue to rise to the point where all coastal cities are inundated).

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?

NZ has had a woeful record on GHG emissions since the 1990's. This, for a developed country, that can most afford to make changes. We need to set a target like zero nett emissions by 2050, and possibly look at negative emissions post that time. The situation is critical and all our head room has been lost over the last 25 years. We have a wealth of alternative energy sources in this country. Most are currently economic, even without costing the externalities into fossil fuels!

We can easily and quickly move to an electric and hydrogen based economy over the next 35 years.

Look at how the developed world responded in terms of financial support and leadership to both the GFC and the so called terrorism threat.

This is the kind of leadership that we need on climate disruption and global sea level rise. But this will require special leadership in the democratic context.

As the PM has famously said: 'GET SOME GUTS'

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?

The Stern report has reported on this; the narrow costs are not insurmountable and will be politically palatable with courageous leadership.

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Of course when the real costs are taken into account, we are currently far in deficit and any move to a low carbon economy will be economically, socially and morally positive.

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?

This is playing politics.

We need strong and honest leadership from Government/Parliament first up.

Then we need to have the real options for the future laid out before the electorate. I believe that if this is properly done the electorate will accept the changes required. The future on the current trajectory for our grandchildren, great grandchildren and beyond is bleak indeed and no one would accept this if they understood.

We then have to set an ambitious target.

Then have a debate about how to get there. Most of the technology already exists and will improve rapidly in the near future.

Summary

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

In the same way that we and the rest of the developed world responded to the GFC and 'terrorism' i.e. not by endless debating for 25 years but immediate action, in the face of a crisis.

Other comments

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

the headings for the text boxes have been disappearing / changing while I wrote this, so some of the text boxes might not make sense in terms of the headings.

My message for the Government would be 'Do what is right, not what is politically expedient. This is the biggest challenge that human kind has faced by far, and to date we have utterly failed the test. Are you up for it?'