

316

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3 June 2015

Submission on New Zealand's Climate Change Target

We are approaching this from the wrong end. Surely it makes more sense to work out what kind of steps New Zealand can take to reduce emissions and only then set the target.

Our target should be fair and ambitious: it should be high enough to demonstrate that we are prepared to pull our weight, robust enough to be achievable even if that achievement is going to involve a lot of effort and some sacrifice, but not so high that we set ourselves up for failure.

Many claim that the target we set should take into account the economic cost of whatever we have to do to achieve it. But far more important are the long-term economic and other costs of not setting as high a target as we can. What if other countries impose sanctions on us for not committing or achieving enough?

Now is not the time for timidity or lack of will. Our economy has developed on the back of emissions; now is the time to pay for that. In looking at the cost of taking action we also need to look very hard at the cost of not taking action. The longer we delay meaningful action the more it will cost.

Whatever New Zealand decides, our impact on global climate change will be minor. That however is no reason for us to turn our back on boldness and pass the buck to the future. We should see this as an opportunity for practical and creative solutions, and for leadership.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'John Key', written over the printed name 'PM Norton'.

PM Norton

A short, horizontal blue ink flourish or underline mark.