

Climate Change Contribution Consultation

Ian Orchard



Phone



This document is my opinions and a suggestion for dealing with one aspect of our carbon footprint. A second document accompanying this one follows your pro forma.

Our modern society is addicted to fossil energy. It has granted us amazing luxury that would have been unbelievable to our ancestors just 200 years ago. We enjoy travel, medicine, surgery & dentistry, education, communications, entertainment and much more, far beyond the wildest imagination even of royalty in those days.

But it comes at dreadful cost, the potential to grind civilization to a halt and render the planet uninhabitable. Thus it is essential we face up to the fact that the end of the golden weather is nigh and that the wonderful lifestyles we have assumed were our birthright must dwindle or our descendants will have no birthrights.

There are many ways we can contributed to the war effort (for this is going to require just that) and as a regular cyclist I would like to focus on one aspect. Our beloved motor cars.

Here in New Zealand our cities and lifestyles are designed on the assumption that everyone has access to a tonne or three of steel, plastic & rubber capable of speeds up to 200kph, that is burdened with intrusion bars, air bags and other safety equipment to protect us from accidents. All the more ridiculous when much of the time they are creeping like snails in peak hour traffic.

My proposal is to accept that our lifestyles will change eventually and preempt the inevitable, by downsizing our expectations for the size, weight and speed of cars. In fact we only NEED about 40cc per adult passenger to get about, meaning most domestic cars could be limited to 200cc motors and still function. The added 2000+cc on most of our cars is there for vanity and because we expect it to be there.

Yes, such vehicles would be slow, but as such they could limit much of the safety

equipment, improving their carbon footprints in both manufacture and operation. Few realise that you can easily drive from Christchurch to Dunedin at a maximum speed of 50kph entirely in daylight. The only reason we expect to get down there in 4 hours is because we can.

The problem of course is that we would all have to make the move to light, slow, economical cars together. I can assure you that it's no fun jockeying with SUVs and even though folk would accept smaller cars to maintain at least parts of our lifestyles they won't want to share the roads with the behemoths. Given that the imports of 2015 are going to still be around in 2035 we should be planning the downsizing now, even if 200cc 5 seaters don't even exist yet.

Electric vehicles, both hybrid and plug-in are growing in popularity and when firms like BMW are planning on phasing out pure petrol and diesel cars by 2022, we should be also be planning for EVs now. They too should be small and slow, the Tesla is an amazingly powerful and fast car but it would not be safe sharing the road with econo-cars.

And trucks? Clearly goods services need to continue and ways will have to be found to keep the econo-cars and trucks apart, but rest assured, there are lots of similar problems coming down the highway. No-one ever claimed mitigation was going to be easy, just way, way easier and cheaper than adaptation.

Footnote:

Is anyone planning for roading maintenance in the low-carbon future? We're currently very dependant on asphalt that is a fossil carbon by-product and the commonest alternative is the equally carbon-intensive concrete.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

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Q1: 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, with reservations. It's what is not there that is a worry.

1b. What is most important to you?

*Costs and impacts, particularly of **adaptation** in addition to mitigation. Adaptation rarely gets a mention presumably because the numbers get very frightening very quickly and politicians don't want to hear bad news.*

Q2: 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?

Our targets are woefully inadequate and we're not likely to meet even them at our present rate. We should have introduced a fiscally neutral carbon tax years ago, the carbon trading scheme was a farce riddled with loopholes from day one. Governments have no problem imposing taxes on tobacco and alcohol to discourage consumption yet fossil carbon, far more damaging, gets off with a pat on the wrist.

Q3: How will our contribution affect New Zealanders?

3. What level of cost is appropriate for New Zealand to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions? For example, what would be a reasonable reduction in annual household consumption?

*Our parents and grandparents accepted serious privations during the World Wars, considering the dangers of the current threats we should equally be on a war-time footing. Where is Churchill when we need him?
See comments on carbon tax.*

Q4: Opportunities

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?

*All of the options suggested are viable, but it's disturbing how few of them are being encouraged by our present Government. We should be **leading** the change to low or nil carbon, instead we fiddle our figures and fluster.*

My worry is that given the fragile state of global finances, our attempts to limit climate change could be kneecapped by the on-going financial crisis that started back in 2008 and has only had its cracks papered over.

Summary

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

Pay attention to the scientific warnings, plan for the worst and hope for the best.

(1) We should have started a "Manhattan Project" urgency program of tree planting and soil sequestration of charcoal decades ago

(2) Introduce a fiscally neutral carbon tax immediately. If British Columbia can do it (and amazingly that tax is very popular there) we can too. Such a tax encourages people to reduce their carbon footprints without coercion and should have been welcomed by far-sighted politicians.

Other comments

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

They should note that the NZ Flag Consultation meeting in Christchurch drew an audience of 10, while the Climate Change Consultation filled the large Russley Golf Clubrooms lounge, standing room only. A clear message as to where our priorities are and where theirs' should be too.