Submission on

Setting New Zealand’s post-2020 climate change target

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Significant sectors of New Zealand’s economy are highly dependant on stable ranges of climatic conditions to maintain their productivity and sustainability. This relative stability is being threatened by the effects of past and present levels of global anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions. Predictions for changes to our climate include: more frequent and extreme storms, significant changes in patterns and intensity of rainfall events and sea-level rise leading to coastal erosion. These conditions will have our businesses and communities reacting to loss rather than proactively planning for and investing in the future.

Given our circumstances, New Zealand has every reason to encourage the world to take action on climate change. We have demonstrated that we can, as New Zealanders, inspire the world on social and environmental issues. Despite our size, we are known for our fair and innovative ways of solving problems. Our present government is not representing us well in this regard. In suggesting that we should take a back seat and let the rest of the world work it out, is both short term politicking and denies our character as New Zealanders.

We have a lot to loose. Climate change impacts will not be evenly shared. Individuals, communities, businesses and countries will suffer unsustainable losses. Our Pacific Island neighbors will be driven from their homelands. Our diverse native flora and fauna will struggle to adapt to the changes in climate. These are not costs that are considered in our “cost of living” but they are strongly connected to what we value. If we take the time to think about it......

Action required:
**Invest in our future.**

The Government’s fixation on the short-term costs of taking action is flawed and damaging. This is about investing in the future. Failing to act will cost us and cost future generations even more dearly. As we delay taking action to cut carbon emissions, we give up an opportunity to diversify our economy and be world leading in creating a low-carbon-emission economy.

**Zero carbon dioxide emissions.**

Carbon dioxide is the main driver of long-term climate change. At current rates of emissions, the world will blow its proposed carbon budget by 2035. Regardless of what we do about other emissions from agriculture, every country ultimately needs to reduce CO2 emissions to zero to stop climate change. That means shifting from fossil fuels to clean energy and planting forests to absorb carbon.

**Make a credible plan (with targets).**

In order to meet our targets we need a credible national strategy for how we can achieve them. Without a clear pathway, targets are just empty numbers. Despite existing targets for 2020 and 2050, New Zealand’s emissions have continued to rise. Official projections say they will continue rising under current policies.

**Working together.**

This issue needs cooperation across the political spectrum, with business, with farmers, and communities to make this work. We need stable climate policy that steers us clearly towards a zero carbon society. This will allow businesses to make good long-term decisions and New Zealand will benefit by attracting investment in low carbon industries and innovation.

**We can’t wait.**

We need to get to work today. Delaying action makes it harder to meet our targets and creates more costs onto young people to deal with in the future. There are many beneficial actions the Government could take now together with businesses and communities to kick-start the transition.

I appreciate the opportunity to submit on this important issue.

Martin Payne