

Climate Change Consultation Contribution

Personal Submission

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Response to Discussion Document

Q1

- (a) Do you agree with the above objectives for our contribution?
- (b) What is the most important to you?

- (a) Yes, I agree with the objectives for the contribution. With regard to the second objective it is important that the costs of not acting to reduce greenhouse gases are considered and that the public is fully informed about these.
- (b) The third objective is most important to me. New Zealand cannot afford to further delay making real changes to reduce our emissions – lack of significant action thus far has meant that our emissions have increased by 21% (or more depending on whose figures are considered) since 1990 rather than reduced by 5% as per initial stated intent. Climate change is the most serious threat facing our world – we cannot ignore this or rely on a future technological fix. New Zealanders must be well informed. Making the necessary changes to reduce emissions may be difficult and costly in the short term but it must be done. Well presented information is needed to get people on board with making these changes.

Q2

What do you think the nature of New Zealand's emissions and economy means for the level of target that we set?

While reducing our total emissions is a significant challenge because, as the paper states, 65% come from transport and agriculture, I believe there are a number of actions we can take to reduce our emissions and that we need to start making serious efforts to do so.

I am dismayed that in the 2014 Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI) ranking 58 countries which account for 90% of global CO₂ emissions New Zealand ranks 43rd overall, and that in the policy part of the Index it ranks 53rd.

The Index also notes that industrial emissions are increasing rather rapidly in New Zealand. Industrial emissions could be relatively easily reduced by markedly increasing the use of renewable energy and

phasing out the use of coal, oil and gas in this area. Why not introduce a carbon tax on the use of fossil fuel and provide incentives to use solar energy – industry largely operates in daytime – and possibly wind energy.

The CCPI ranked New Zealand at 7th for electricity generation, yet experts criticised the government for not proactively promoting renewable energy production while leaving it to the market to displace fossil fuel emissions from the generation sector and at the same time putting effort into promoting oil and gas exploration. CCPI experts think New Zealand should develop further its cheap renewable energy. I believe that New Zealand should be aiming for 100% of our electricity generation to come from renewable sources by 2030.

In both industry and energy production New Zealand needs to phase out the use of coal.

In the transport sector a lot more could be done to reduce emissions. Use of rail and further electrification of rail. Incentives and indeed legislation to improve fuel efficiency in vehicles. Disincentives for commuting by car unless shared/car pooled. A carbon tax on fossil fuels to encourage less use of fuel in private and commercial vehicles. This tax could be used to improve and/or subsidise public transport and assist research into/and use of biofuels.

In the area of waste continued encouragement to reduce waste especially food waste.

While reducing emissions in the agriculture sector is more challenging a number of actions to reduce these are possible.

The forestry sector needs particular attention. While reports vary I understand that on balance deforestation has taken place in recent decades particularly in the exotic forest sector. Carter Holt Harvey cut down large areas of forest and converted the land to dairy farming. We need to plant more exotic and native trees. While there are organisations that foster native forest restoration (that could do with more financial support) the government could also foster more tree planting on agricultural land (especially steep and marginal land) either directly or through local authorities.

The government could also encourage change to organic farming methods. A paper published this year by the Rodale Institute in the US has calculated that if all of the world switched to 'regenerative organic farming' using best practices it would be enough to offset all of civilisations current emissions. In addition this month Dairy NZ scientist Dr John Roche revealed research which showed that increasing herd sizes hasn't increased the income of dairy farmers. Reducing herd size and introducing organic practices would also have the added benefit of greatly reducing pollution of waterways by nitrogen and phosphorus. (While dairy farms are required to fence and plant waterways dry stock farms are not. Yet beef stock foul waterways just as much and many dairy cows are wintered on dry stock farms.)

Continued encouragement and support of scientific research on reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the agricultural sector is also needed. (In the current economic climate in New Zealand I believe there needs to be more consideration for given to the environmental and social costs as opposed to

just the economic costs when considering recommendations provided as a result of scientific research.)

Our agricultural sector stands to suffer most if climate change is not addressed and thus one of our most important sources of income would be reduced.

I support setting an ambitious target for emissions reduction – at least 20% below 1990 levels by 2030. This will not be easy but the negative effects of global warming have to be taken seriously and will require some changes and sacrifices by us all.

I do not support the continued reliance on international carbon credits to offset emissions. This is a means whereby wealthier countries avoid making real emissions reductions and shift the cost elsewhere. It also enables the fossil fuel industries to continue developing instead of scaling down exploration and extraction, something that will be required if we are to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions. New Zealand needs to phase out this scheme.

Q3

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 income?

We need to accept that the costs of meeting an emission reduction target are necessary in order to avoid dangerous levels of global warming and avoid the costs of global warming – costs related to floods, storm damage, road damage, coastal erosion and potential reduction in agricultural income and possibly income from tourism.

The discussion document estimates reduction in annual household income and I note that the difference between that for a target of 5% reduction in GHGs and 20% reduction is not great, and that the cost is largely related to New Zealand's failure to reduce emissions since 1990. To make the cost to households fairer I suggest that lower income households are protected from these costs, especially as they are lower consumers of goods and services.

I also note that there is no estimation of costs to industry and business. Will they be paying a share of the costs? See suggestion re introducing a carbon tax above. It has been reported that the government has given free carbon credits to industries that cause carbon emissions. This is not fair or equitable. In addition our society needs to adjust to the fact that we cannot continue increasing profits at the expense of the well being of our environment (and society) and that some reduction in profit is likely to be the price we will need to pay to avoid damaging global warming. I suggest that the agricultural sector needs special consideration with regard to costs. We rely on our agricultural economy and at the same time this sector will suffer more from the effects of global warming than other business.

Q4

Of these opportunities which do you think are the most likely to occur, or be most important for New Zealand?

I believe that all the examples of new opportunities for reducing emissions are important and can occur with the development of appropriate policies.

I agree with efforts to increase fuel and energy efficiency. A tax on fossil fuels is a way to improve efficiency and the money raised can be used to fund research and subsidies, e.g. for better insulation and heating for houses. I also believe that improvements cannot be left to market forces and that the government should introduce legislation that will foster such efficiencies, e.g. a warrant of fitness for rental housing. A 15 year study by the University of Otago's Wellington-based research team has shown that improvements in housing also provides added advantages in significantly reducing health costs and improving educational attendance. Increased insulation also reduces energy use.

Along with fostering greater fuel efficiency in vehicles, high, and I hope increased levels of renewable electricity generation, would enable gradual transfer to electric vehicles and increased electrification of rail transport. I suggest that exempting electric vehicles from road user charges for a longer period than the document suggests (e.g. to 2030 rather than up to 2020). This would help to offset the greater cost of electric vehicles and thus encourage those who are able to make this transfer to do so. Making future road user charges less than those for fossil fuel vehicles could also foster uptake.

Q5

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

We cannot rely on future new technologies to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. I believe that we need to act as if these new technologies will not be developed. Then if/when they emerge we will be able to reduce emissions over and above the targets and possibly help reduce the degree of global warming predicted.

With regard to the impact and costs to the economy we need to weigh this up against the costs of not acting to reduce emissions and the impact of global warming. We also need to accept that economic growth and our standard of living cannot continue rising if this is at the expense of the future well-being of our planet and global society. There are potential benefits to be had from a more sustainable economy, agriculture and lifestyle.

The discussion document states that "Despite the growth in total emissions, New Zealand is on track to meet its current 2020 target through a mix of reducing domestic emissions, use of forestry sinks, and recognising a surplus of emission reduction units from our first target under the Kyoto Protocol". I assume the target was 5% below 1990 levels. The CCPI report summary I have seen states that "according to NZ's own projections, the country's 2020 emission reduction target of -5% below 1990's level is already out of reach: gross emissions are officially forecast to be just 0.6% lower than the business as usual scenario (BAU)." If the forestry sinks have not been increased and possibly

been reduced since 1990 then we are meeting the rest of the target through carbon trading. That means in essence we have not taken any real actions to reduce carbon emissions.

The CCPI analysis released in December 2014 suggests that New Zealand is not doing its fair share in reducing its carbon emissions – we need to make a concerted effort to address this issue. While we are a small country producing a small proportion of the overall global emissions we should be doing our fair share to reduce them. We also need to prepare ourselves for the future changes that will occur if other countries act decisively to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Final comment

I am deeply concerned about what I see as the inadequacies of this consultation process.

The continued rise in greenhouse gas emissions and resulting global warming is arguably the greatest threat to the well-being of our planet and has been known about for decades but New Zealand (along with many other countries) has not seriously addressed this issue. Even now the New Zealand public is generally not well informed on the issue. Understandably it all seems too hard and is politically unpalatable but it must be done and we need to face up to that.

The distribution of the discussion document and the notification of the public meetings has been limited and poorly publicised and I am aware that many people interested in participating in the meetings have not found out about them in time to attend.