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?   Yes

1b. What is most important to you?
I think it is important to re-frame the issue as a moral and environmental emergency, rather than an issue of economic costs and burdens. The reality is that the economy (the NZ economy, the global economy) is only able to operate within a functioning environment.

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?
It means that we have an opportunity to provide leadership in the realm of renewable energy worldwide. We could increase this opportunity by setting a commitment to move quickly to 100% renewable electricity. There is considerable urgency in diversifying our economy - our over-reliance on extractive and agricultural industries simultaneously make it difficult to reduce emissions meaningfully, and cause serious issues around freshwater allocations.

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?
As above, I think the question "how will our contribution affect New Zealanders?" is not well served by the follow-up :what level of cost is appropriate...?" There is no mention here of the opportunities of moving towards a low-carbon economy: business opportunities and innovation would undoubtedly arise if our economy was oriented towards clean-green technologies over extractive and agricultural activities. There are several possibilities that would change the picture markedly, including the decommissioning of Tiwai Point. If this happened, and if meaningful efficiency measures were introduced, NZ could move almost immediately to 100% renewable electricity. Further, it is surprising that there is no talk in this question of the costs to New Zealanders and the NZ economy of inaction, even though these costs (more and more intense extreme weather events and their costs on land-based industries and households; investment claim events, etc.) Obviously NZ is a small emitter in the global scheme of things, but NZ needs to provide leadership in the global fight to address this pressing issue.

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 above, provided there is a will at the political level to make wise choices in the interests of all New Zealanders, including future generations. At the moment, the political system seems geared towards protecting and
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advancing the interests of certain sectoral groups, who may well be opposed to some of most of these opportunities.

I note that p.15 makes no mention of transport policy, or urban planning policy, yet these issues, when combined, are vital opportunities in our inevitable and necessary transition. Again, the main stumbling block seems to be the ideologies and interests that dominate current political thinking, at he expense of communities and our society.

Summary

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

Again, I see the issue in ethical-environmental terms, and believe it is important to act in the interests of humanity and the planet. Technologies and costs will work their way out in response to the global community having the courage to take the steps that scientists agree are necessary.

Other comments

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

On this point I wholeheartedly agree with the submission of the Sustainable Business Network:

Some points we have noted from climate change consultation meetings include the need:
• for information on the impacts of doing nothing on the New Zealand economy and its reputation
• for information on the economic benefits of taking action
• to remove subsidies from the fossil fuel industry
• to widen responsibilities of directors to include climate change risks
• for KiwiSaver to remove fossil fuels from its investment portfolio
• for cross party consensus on targets and plans
• for a responsible body that operates beyond electoral cycles.

Some other issues to consider for your submission:
• Global reputation: what is the value of our reputation? What are the implications for a nation proud of our environment of not contributing to this serious global issue?
• Tourism and exports: what are the risks on tourism and export if we lag behind the world in climate change policy?
• Intergenerational responsibility: Is it right to leave these issues for future generations to solve?
• Economic resiliency: reliance on offshore fossil fuels or drilling/ fracking for oil has much greater impacts compared to utilising our own natural renewable energy and rapidly innovating smart energy sources and fuels.
• Offsetting: this could be achieved through investing in restoring New Zealand’s indigenous biodiversity, for example through the Permanent Forest Sink Initiative. This could help to increase iconic destinations for tourism. Offsetting alone misses the opportunities to innovate and make a step change to new technologies with less environmental impact.