

NZ's contribution to the new international climate change agreement: individual submission

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ph [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]

Objectives for the contribution

1a. I **do not agree** with the following three objectives set for NZ's 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.

1b. What is most important to you?

That NZ stops our self-sabotaging delay in climate action. That whatever happens or doesn't happen in Paris, we start legislating now for an independent Climate Commission to oversee rapid all-emissions reductions (especially the long-lived gases), that we have annual transparent publicly available reporting on emissions reductions, that there's an all-of-government approach to this, that the Prime Minister leads NZ's zero emissions transition, that robust domestic policies ensure our most vulnerable households are protected from any negative impacts of both climate mitigation and climate changes, that we have an Emissions Trading Scheme that actually rapidly reduces all gases in all sectors, that 100%+ reductions on 1990 levels by 2050 are gazetted now and 2020, 2025 and 2030 targets are gazetted immediately after Paris, that there's a widespread public education programme, that all government spending reflects the zero emissions pathway imperative, and that we acknowledge our shared responsibility for lesser developed countries including those already ravaged by climate changes they did not cause.

What would be a fair contribution for New Zealand?

A fair contribution is taking a broad approach to our contribution – calling for a global commitment to zero carbon by 2050, setting a target of at least 40% emissions reductions on 1990 levels by 2030, contributing generously to developing nations' low emissions development, responsibly recognising our loss and damage liabilities and increasing our refugee quotas to include climate refugees – and not playing games with rule-setting that every other country can see through. This is not a trade agreement, this is a global security crisis. Dealing fairly and transparently is paramount.

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 we are a lucky country – if we won't rapidly reduce emissions given all the opportunities we have and our prosperity, we cannot expect any other nation to act responsibly. As a small open economy, we are very unwise to side with the likes of Canada, Australia and Japan, for fear of trade retaliation and the impact that unchecked climate changes will have on our economy and trading partners.

How will our contribution affect New Zealanders?

If NZ takes a broad approach to our contribution setting a target, we may be able to convince the world we are serious about climate action – because NZ needs the world to act responsibly (see below).

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?

Given that it has been well-established that it is much cheaper to rapidly reduce emissions to slow climate changes, than attempt to adapt to climate changes (which is ultimately futile), the cost is logically whatever it takes. Certainly investing in climate protection is a much safer and wiser strategy for middle-aged and younger NZers hoping for a comfortable retirement, than KiwSaver.

As it happens, the modelling, flawed as it is, based on GDP (rather than better measures of national well-being), ignoring behavioural change, mitigation co-benefits, technological change and assuming we purchase overseas units, still concludes the cost to households is only around \$10 a week. Clearly NZ can afford much more than this, and as a high emitting nation, with high per capita emissions, historically profiting from high emissions and with plentiful natural resources (including scarcely populated arable lands and a mild climate), we have to be seen by developing nations to be doing our fair share in order to get the international cooperation we need on climate action.

NZ is in a bargaining situation with the world – as a small open economy heavily dependent on stable climate and ocean conditions, plus economically healthy trading partners, we need international climate action to safeguard our future. We are not living in an economic bubble, we are highly dependent on the rest of the world for our survival. We ignore reality at our peril. We need to safeguard our farming, fishing and tourism sectors by ensuring adequate global climate action and ensuring these sectors remain competitive in a world trending to zero emissions. We can't afford stranded high emissions assets nor over-protected industries – the coal-powered milk treatment plant at Darfield is a prime example of foolish behaviour in a vacuum of government climate leadership.

It's obvious that we urgently need better modelling and conceptually we are not limited by domestic emissions potentials, although in the interests of economic viability and resilience, plus capturing other mitigation co-benefits, it makes sense to maximise domestic reductions. Certainly we can reduce emissions by more than 100% on 1990 levels by 2030 – by including international units if we redesign our ETS to include all gases and sectors, commence credible domestic action over the next few months and present an internationally credible contribution that encourages adequate action by developing and developed nations.

We need to include an initial target of at least 40% reductions on 1990 levels by 2030 in NZ's contribution, with the intention of moving much higher prior to the Paris talks in order to secure agreement on global emissions reductions that keep global warming much closer to 1.5°C than 2°C.

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?

New Zealand has many opportunities to reduce emissions. We need an Emissions Trading Scheme that works within an overall all-emissions cap (three caps for three gases) and incentivises rapid plantation planting on marginal land to reduce the potential \$52 billion dollar bill from 2020+ harvesting, and encourages our key export industries to be emissions-free as possible.

We need to back a strong price on emissions with well-designed regulation – and refuse to sign any trade treaty that threatens our capacity to regulate in NZ's best interests.

There is much that could already be happening in the agricultural sector – but isn't, because the signals aren't there. It is possible for farmers to reduce all agricultural emissions right now by diversifying farming and reducing farming intensity – often with greater profit and economic resilience in the face of fluctuating dairy prices. Having current best practice rapidly become widespread also increases the value and take-up of new technology break-throughs. Reducing dairy intensification means reducing costly inputs and reducing dependence on imported products. We need a farming accord which sees taxpayer support as climate events take their toll, in return for serious emissions reductions (especially the long-lived gases) and steps to climate-proof farming practices. We're in this together – but it's a two-way relationship.

We need to step up in urban areas with improved building standards and retro-fitting buildings. Three-quarters of transport occurs in urban areas – we could easily set a target for zero emissions transport well before 2030, which would have considerable co-benefits in less air pollution, greater physical activity and community connection, safer streets, and eliminate our dependence on overseas imported oil. NZ could be the first 100% clean energy powered country – we already have a head-start with our hydro, much potential for solar, wind and tide energy, as well as bio-fuels from wood-waste and other sources.

Facing a global carbon budget means it's not just about the emissions we produce in NZ that are counted in a human-constructed Kyoto framework, we need to reduce emissions in all areas. That means banning all fossil fuel extraction with a just transition for small coal-mining communities for a more secure economic base. That means starting to measure and reduce international aviation and shipping emissions – ref the UK One-In-Five campaign which is now more like Two-In-Five as flight reductions proved better for business. That also means monitoring and reducing our high-emissions consumption. And it means divesting from all high emissions industries – investing in industries that increase the risk of climate changes is not a viable investment under any logic.

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

NZ should allow a buffer for uncertainty – that we may not fully understand all climate feedbacks yet, some nations may be initially slower than we'd like in acting, adaptation costs may be greater than we expect over the next decade or so, global economic recession may be sooner and harsher than we expect, and other factors that we are not aware of yet. This means we need to maximise our emissions reductions efforts to reach zero emissions as quickly as we can, and stay easily within our fair share of the remaining global carbon budget.

Expect the unexpected, this is new territory for the world. But we also need to appreciate that the best way of encouraging the new technology which may save us, is to set strong clear signals that NZ is intent on rapidly reducing emissions in all sectors and that the best business research and development investment is in low or zero emissions technology.

Other comments

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

From the rushed round of public meetings at very short notice, the absence of advertising beyond emailing some names and some organisations, the flawed economic analysis and the biased discussion document, I do not think the NZ government can claim to have consulted with NZ civil society in good faith or transparently. I regard this consultation as just the start to NZ deciding a fair contribution to the new international climate change agreement. The irony is the money and time

spent on consulting over NZ's flag, this is so much more fundamentally important for NZ's future. The government has known since November 2013, that this INDC is required, preferably by March 2015.

I would like to endorse the submissions by OraTaiao: The NZ Climate & Health Council, Generation Zero, 350 Aotearoa, WWF-NZ, the economics firm Motu, and Oxfam. There is a wealth of knowledge and experience for NZ to call on.

I could write chapters on what NZ can do to future-proof our country – there's so much NZ-based research readily available for government, businesses, communities and households on how we can easily and rapidly reduce emissions, this is not difficult.

We can easily transition fairly to a zero emissions economy and prosper with increased regional and urban employment, better health and well-being, stronger more connected communities and secure a hopeful future if we start moving this year in NZ and with our INDC – but we are running out of time, each year of delay makes transition more difficult and less likely to succeed in stabilising our climate and ocean.

I feel like NZ is in an information bubble, there is so much valuable research and ideas emerging internationally that has mainstream endorsement from World Bank, IEA, major governments – yet we are ignoring it all and wasting so many opportunities.

There are more than four million reasons to act quickly on climate change from concern for others to concern for ourselves as we future-proof our economy and health – if you're in your fifties like me, realise this is not just about our kids, it's also about us as we age and become vulnerable, dependent on the younger generation for support. If we don't take responsible action now while we still can, before adaptation costs overwhelm us, how can we expect them to care for us? History will show how easy it was for us to act, we don't have an excuse.

As a household, we've found it fairly easy to reduce our emissions, possibly halving over the last decade, and if anything, it's been life-giving and fun. We certainly wouldn't have called ourselves 'greenies' in the beginning – and we're certainly healthier, fitter, freer and financially better off now. I've learnt that starting small is ok, not to do everything at once, but that one change has an interesting way of building to the next change. Walking the talk at home has also deepened our understanding of the possibilities for rapid widespread change – but to really get the change we need, that change has to be supported by intelligent government decisions.

I feel NZ has ignored climate change at our cost, we have failed to see how climate touches almost every aspect of our lives, the opportunities and the risks. We need a much more sophisticated understanding of climate changes and climate action to protect our country and what we value whether that's financial security, independence, entrepreneurship, doing our bit internationally, innovation, compassion, biodiversity, intergenerational loyalty or all of the above. We have to take off our business-as-usual blind-fold and see our world as it really is, including all our opportunities. It's now almost a decade since I had that 'oh shit' moment as many describe it, and realised that climate change is the biggest social policy challenge I could see and that I didn't want to work on anything else. This is big, but it's also an enormous exciting adventure and challenge, a chance to really unite as a country and deserve the heritage our ANZAC soldiers created for us.

I'll finish by adding a link to 'Age of Smart' a vision for NZ in 2020 that I wrote with help back in 2009 prior to Copenhagen, much of this still applies now in 2015: <http://www.celsias.co.nz/article/age-smart/> Why wouldn't NZ want to contribute our very best to the new international climate change agreement? The time for action is now – we can easily protect our future together.