

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?

That we as a nation take a lead role in moving to a zero carbon emission future in order to minimize impacts on our children and their children. That we do this in a planned and intelligent way so as to maximise benefit, in the broadest sense, where possible along the way. I like the "ambitious" in the Objectives. The "fair" needs to be managed lest it be used as a reason to hold on to the status quo longer than prudent. It is not going away so lets get in boots and all.

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?

Does this refer to NZ's high agricultural component? Certainly we have to be mindful of the high level of agricultural loading but this shouldn't be a get-out-of-jail card. Ideally, as a nation we should seek to develop strong export revenue earning sources that are not primary production based to compliment existing industry

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?

This has to be managed in some sliding way so that those with the capacity to pay are impacted first. But such is the level of inequality of income in NZ that the higher end of households could lose 10-20% and face no clear reduction in functional standard of living. But is it clear that it will cost New Zealanders? Opportunities will come with this transition.

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 these points have the potential to benefit NZ substantially. The point about "Reducing greenhouse gas emissions and increasing forest sinks can lead to improved health, environmental and social well-being, and improved erosion control and water quality" is surely the motivation for the whole initiative (not the forest sinks – where did that come from, isn't that a minor part of the story)? With NZ's diverse range of renewable energy and willingness to seek solutions there is a real opportunity to switch to an electric-powered transport base supported by renewable energy. Technologies associated with these can then be exported offshore. The Box 9 on biofuels seems rather anachronistic.

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Summary

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

It should not wring its hands about uncertainties in the face of a growing certainty in dramatic global change. It should instead factor in human ingenuity and provide more weighting to the costs of not doing anything - which will be large. In the past few years NZ has put most of its future energy eggs in the "find oil" basket only to see the bottom fall out of this market in a very short timeframe.

Other comments

6. Is there any further information you wish the Government to consider? Please explain.
The statement that "NZ is so small in a global sense – we make no difference" is completely wrong. If we make a stand as a nation we actually count for more than our numbers. Internationally, people say "NZ did X & Y". They don't then say "but there are only 4M of them". So we have a disproportionately large impact.

We've just been through a period of focusing and mythologizing the ANZAC sacrifice for future generations. We appear very happy to accept their sacrifice but a little hesitant about making a contribution (far less dangerous) to our generational challenge. How do we want to be viewed by future generations, assuaging they have the strength to reflect on the actions of their forebears?

NZ is also quite good at selecting the most environmentally sound solution as long as it is the cheapest. By factoring in the future cost of doing the cheapest and perhaps pushing a bit harder, we can start to look our descendents in the eye.

The hands-off approach to tariffs for energy generation and user input into the energy system is a cop-out. This says that the market will save us. The market doesn't have saving our species, and the global ecosystem we are part of, as a mandate. Or if it does work towards this end, it will be in a way that doesn't work for NZ (i.e. high carbon products will be avoided by overseas consumers). And besides, it is not a fair market either; for example energy utilities are able to restrict growth of user autonomy. Again this is not universal and we will find that international market initiatives will bypass NZ.

The document doesn't appear to identify the primary pathway through which climate will impact NZ. We will be relatively protected living in a maritime climate. It is the global economic downstream impact that we will feel. With major coastal cities retreating from rising oceans, and reduced food production capacity the world will be a poorer place in terms of capacity to spend. Tourism will drop, there will be less capacity to buy luxury produce. Our burden in terms of supporting Pacific Island States will increase.