Setting New Zealand’s post-2020 climate change target

Submission form

Contact information

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Objectives for the contribution

1a. We have set the following three objectives for our 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.

Do you agree with these objectives for our contribution?

☑ Yes
☐ No

1b. What is most important to you?

Yes I agree on an ambitious target but 5% is not that, and is not by international standards. NZ has a lot of catching up to do also given that we have one of the highest Carbon emissions per
capita. It also does not provide a long-term solution and lacks a sense of the appropriate urgency for an issue that affects health, wellbeing, ecosystems and in the long term potentially life itself.

I urge that all these submissions are taken seriously. I am up at midnight working on this and have attended two public meetings regarding the consultations. It was very sad to see the lack of advertising that went in to that and the fact that Tim Grosser was not present to hear the important views and concerns of the public. There were some very well-researched speakers. I do hope that these submissions are not just a tick box exercise, and that wider consultation may be done in future that is more accessible to the average person who is not involved with environmental groups.

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?

I strongly believe we have to go with whatever level of emissions target will save the world from ecosystem and climate change that lead to, including sea-level rise, salination of drinking water, reduction in areas crops can be grown, increasing damage from weather events to name some. Scientific advice puts this at a minimum of 40% reductions (below 1990 levels) by 2020 and 80% by 2050 (James Renwick interview 2013 and Thin Ice documentary attest to these as minimum reductions to keep temperatures under a 2degree rise). This should be our minimum NZ’s proposed reduction of 5% is therefore fully inadequate and an embarassment for a country that provide some scientific leadership in the climate change arena. The short-term nature of these proposals is dangerous, and will just make any long term solution all the harder. I understand we should be aiming towards zero emissions by the end of the century as a minimum.

Continued carbon emmissions and subsequent temperature rise is a grave economical threat and serves to risk huge costs to agriculture, fisheries, tourism etc upon which NZ depends. practical change should be to move away from dairy farming to agriculture that has low carbon emissions.

How will our contribution affect New Zealanders?

3. What level of cost is appropriate for New Zealand to reduce it greenhouse gas emissions? For example, what do you think would be a reasonable impact on annual household consumption?

As per above. WE must take a stance based on what’s required rather than what it will cost, because if we don’t halt the rapidly changing climate, the cost will be everything. The cost of going for a lower target than 40% must be carefully analyzed. Economic growth should not be the guiding principle. We can work the economic challenges out once we have a commitment to the necessary reductions. It is very sad that the community has not been properly informed about the complex reality of climate change, so that more people would be able to submit their thoughts. To do so is a broadscale educational push with information on how people can make positive change. Households need accurate information about relative components of their carbon footprint. For example the cost of air travel and building large homes is relatively high and should be discouraged, even taxed. Whilst I personally love travel, I have made the tough decision to give away international travel because it is so deetrimental. Those people who are high emmitters or where emmissions are based on
luxury/non-essential activities and assets should be targeted before those whose emissions are low and largely related to functioning as a household. It is important that reductions don’t harm the poor more than the wealthy, which is a very real risk, given that those with wealth can have more choice over environmentally-friendly purchases, transport choices, food, where they live, their style of house and energy use etc.

4.

5. 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?

I don’t think many NZ’ers will not voluntarily make a large reduction in emissions because of human nature and the fact that people are constantly bombarded with the invitation to spend money on luxury items, use plastics and other items that are dependent on oil and carbon emissions. There needs to be a turn-around in this culture of spending and driving. The government needs to stop investing in roads which only make it easier for people to use cars. They need to create a public transport system that has far greater appeal than driving, one which is accessible, reliable and costs far less than using a car. A greater investment in planting forests is also needed for absorbing carbon. Divestment to clean energy companies should be promoted to citizens but more importantly to businesses and organisations.

There needs to be a comprehensive plan that is understood by NZ’ers and laws that will keep the government to targets, no matter who is in office. The UK climate change act provides one such model. I would like to see an independent Climate commission. Political parties should be working together on this grave issue as stable policy is essential.

Summary

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

I don’t believe we should rely on future technological advances to solve the problem as they are so uncertain. Even if there are helpful advances they won’t be soon enough or great enough to exempt people from making change to a lower carbon life. NZ should reduce it’s dependence on foreign oil, on coal and gas, and increase investment and reliance on sustainable energies. We should immediately cease operations in the Denniston plateau. There is far more oil on the books of oil companies than would raise the world’s temperature to the dangerous 2 degree mark, so seeking more is foolish. Of course we should also invest in seeking technical solutions.

Other comments

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

I believe as well as the above government targets and actions, there needs to be a strong community awareness raising on this issue. If we look at other threats to health and livelihood such as smoking or domestic violence, there is a large education budget, high profile ads and information
dispercement, and persons employed to spearhead awareness raising. I would like to see analysis of what would be required but to begin with a minimum of a group of 6 paid staff per large city to put together creative proposals and campaigns to help empower people in regard to this issue that affects our children and grandchildren.

This is needed to deal with the all-too-natural human tendency toward 'denial'. I too would probably feel a lot more comfortable with my head well imbedded in in the sand. I have had my eyes to the issue through various documentaries, and through speaking with scientists such as those at Victoria university. I cannot now ignore the seriousness of the situation, but it's scary how little accurate knowledge the average person has about what could be done to help. It is vital the public are given opportunities to hear the facts, to challenge, to question, and to consider their options for change. Critical in mitigating against the heavy blanket of denial is 'seeing' that there are people who do have a plan and are taking positive action, and effective (such as divestment, petitioning, lifestyle choices etc).

I know the work that is required here as I have organised a community showing of ‘Thin Ice’ which was well attended but which took an enormous amount of effort on my behalf and probably a group of about a12 other volunteers. I have had to do this on top of a full-time job and raising children. It should be the auspices of a group of professionals.

When your submission is complete

Email your completed submission to climate.contribution@mfe.govt.nz or post to Climate Change Contribution Consultation, Ministry for the Environment, PO Box 10362, Wellington 6143.

Submissions close at 5.00pm on Wednesday 3 June 2015.