

## SETTING NEW ZEALAND'S POST-2020 CLIMATE CHANGE TARGET SUBMISSION OF RICHARD TONG

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

In March 2011, the New Zealand government adopted the Smokefree 2025 goal for New Zealand. This is a serious attempt to make a major shift in society's attitude to smoking and it came 54 years<sup>1</sup> after U.S. Surgeon General Leroy E. Burney declared it the official position of the U.S. Public Health Service that the evidence pointed to a causal relationship between smoking and lung cancer.

The situation with climate change is very similar. Decades have passed since scientists began warning of the effects of rising levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere caused by human activities and we need a similar clear direction from government to the Smokefree 2025 target. We need a target date by which to phase out fossil fuels and a realistic action plan to achieve the target with milestones along the way. As dire as the present predicament is, it is not the first time that humanity has faced tough decisions as the result of an earlier choice about suitable sources of energy.

Before the large scale exploitation of fossil fuels in the Industrial Revolution human society had made do with human energy, particularly for agriculture. This was taken to its logical conclusion, slavery, in Britain and America from as early as 1500 until it was abolished in the United Kingdom in 1833 and in America in 1863-65. Slavery involved the direct subjugation of peoples from less developed countries to provide energy for agricultural production and harvesting. The effects of slavery were very similar to the climate change situation where it is, and will be, the least fortunate people in the least developed countries who do and will continue to bear the brunt of the effects.

Prime Minister John Key is warning that he has been advised recently that people traffickers have commandeered steel hulled vessels and are aiming at New Zealand. We can say with certainty that the projected climate trends will turn any trickle of refugees into a flood.

### 2.0 WHAT WOULD BE A FAIR CONTRIBUTION FOR NEW ZEALAND?

In order to make any assessment of fairness it would be essential to have one or more models of the economic consequences of **failing** to make substantial cuts in greenhouse gas emissions. This has not been provided by the Ministry for the Environment in the Discussion Document and this renders all economic discussion following from that document spurious – it is missing the elephant in the room.

There is only one sensible place for a small country to place itself and that is leading the pack. It gives the greatest strength of moral argument and it provides myriad new business opportunities.

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<sup>1</sup> June 12<sup>th</sup> 1957, <http://profiles.nlm.nih.gov/ps/retrieve/Narrative/NN/p-nid/60>

In 1981, I was the principal advisor to the Devonport Borough Council when it became the first local authority in New Zealand to declare itself “Nuclear Free”. Within three years this policy had been adopted by 40 local authorities nationwide and was incorporated in government policy. It has now become a significant part of the NZ identity internationally.

Under the leadership of Sir Peter Blake, New Zealand led the world in wind propulsion at sea, with victories in the Whitbread Round the World Race and the America’s Cup. Had we shifted that technical skill to land-based wind energy we would now have a substantial share of the emerging wind technology industry worldwide. The opportunities are far from being closed and New Zealand’s close trading relationship with China could enable many developments taking place in that country to be more fully developed and marketed worldwide with NZ expertise.

### **3.0 CONCLUSION**

Our knowledge of the world has moved on and we need to move as quickly as possible into a post-carbon world. As with the abolition of slavery, there will be industries that loose out but there will be others that boom in the new setting. It is imperative that government lead by clearly stating a target and target date, with milestones along the way, and then make this widely known with the obligations of citizens and industry clearly stated.

Richard Tong

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3<sup>rd</sup> June 2015