Submission on the New Zealand Government’s Climate Change Target
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Submitter: Waikato Environment Centre
Contact for submission: Dr Anna Cox, anna@envirocentre.org.nz

The Waikato Environment Centre (WEC) is a non-governmental organisation with a vision of healthy environments supported by thriving communities. WEC is a centre for environmental learning, a voice for the environment, and a catalyst for environmental action.

The Waikato Environment Centre is responsible for this submission. The centre is managed by Ruth Seabright and governed by a Board of Trustees. The Trustees are Marianna Tyler, Pamela Storey, Bruce Graham, Kareen McLaren, Warren Gumbley, Robert Moore, Sharon Robinson, Katherine Hay, Aaron Fleming and Jason Cargo.

The Waikato Environment Centre thanks the Government of Aotearoa New Zealand for the opportunity to make a submission regarding the Government’s Climate Change target.

The Waikato Environment Centre calls on the Government of Aotearoa New Zealand to adopt a minimum target of a 40% emissions reduction in net domestic greenhouse gas emissions below 1990 levels by 2030.

The Waikato Environment Centre makes this call for the following reasons:

- If anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions continue at their current record-breaking rate, leading to a temperature rise of more than 4°C by the end of the century, 16% of species, or one in six, face extinction. We don’t want this to happen.
- A large fraction of both terrestrial and freshwater species faces increased extinction risk under projected climate change during and beyond the 21st century. We don’t want this to happen.
- All around the Pacific, islanders are struggling to protect their land and livelihoods from encroaching seas and coastal erosion due to climate change. Their climate related challenges are likely to increase. We don’t want this to happen.
- Climate change will result in the increasing acidification of our oceans and loss of marine and coastal ecosystems, biodiversity, and the ecosystem goods, functions, and services they provide for coastal livelihoods worldwide. We don’t want this to happen.
- Climate change over the 21st century is projected to increase displacement of people (climate change refugees) who can no longer live where they are. We don’t want this to happen.
• Climate change increases the vulnerability of the world’s food supply. Food insecurity and the breakdown of food systems is linked to climate change induced warming, drought, flooding, and precipitation variability and extremes, particularly for poorer populations in urban and rural settings. We don’t want this to happen.

• People who are socially, economically, culturally, politically, institutionally, or otherwise marginalized are especially vulnerable to climate change. Climate change increases the vulnerability of poorer communities. We don’t want this to happen.

• Climate-related extremes, such as heat waves, droughts, floods, cyclones, and wildfires alter ecosystems, disrupt food production and damage infrastructure including critical services such as water supply, electricity and health and emergency services. These climate-related extremes kill people as well as negatively affect mental health and well-being, particularly for vulnerable populations. We don’t want this to happen.

• Climate change can indirectly increase risks of violent conflicts in the form of civil war and inter-group violence by amplifying well-documented drivers of these conflicts such as poverty and economic shocks. We don’t want this to happen.

The New Zealand Government has met its current greenhouse gas emissions targets largely through the purchasing of reductions (carbon off-sets) while increasing our emissions at home (21% increase since 1990). The Waikato Environment Centre thinks there is more that we can and should do at home in Aotearoa New Zealand as part of a fair contribution.

The expense of not reducing our emissions is far greater, particularly for future generations, than the costs of reducing our emissions now.

There is a lot we can do now!
• We can diversify our land use practices to reduce methane gas emissions
• We can increase our investment in public transport
• We can upgrade and improve our rail system to allow for greater volumes of freight and passenger transportation
• We can improve our cycling and pedestrian infrastructure
• We can increase our native forest restoration, our afforestation of marginal hill country and our plantation forestry
• We can increase the proportion of electric vehicles.
• We can increase our renewable electricity generation to 100%.
• We can invest in research towards the development of new technologies that will reduce our emissions and our dependency on fossil fuels

Please adopt a minimum target of a 40% emissions reduction in net domestic greenhouse gas emissions below 1990 levels by 2030.