

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? No

1b. What is most important to you?

These objectives are too vague and uncertain to say that I agree with them. Most important to me is that New Zealand significantly and rapidly reduces its GHG emissions from all emitting sectors of society. It is equally important that all of government commits to these objectives and important targets are not subject to shifting political whim.

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?

There is nothing exceptional about NZ's economy or emissions that mean we should not cut emissions substantially and soon. Most emissions are from transport and farming, both of which should be the target for large emission cuts in the near future. Greater commitment to public transport and low-emission transport modes should be made immediately with emission costs of the transport sector internalised to the sector. Similarly, farming has placed a polluting burden on society without paying its share for too long. Existing solutions for the farming sector need to be phased in and incentivised while research and innovation in the sector is ramped up.

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 question needs to be posed in the context of another question: what are the costs of not acting and where will they fall? We know that not acting will induce radical costs on current and future generations and disproportionately affect the poor. Given the importance of the problem, a commitment of spend 2-3% of GDP would be appropriate and should be sufficient. Phrasing in terms of the "household" confuses the sectors of the economy that are producing emissions.

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 opportunities seems realistic and plausible. Ambitious targets should be set to match our collective identity as innovators and international branding as a green, sustainable nation. It is likely that the real innovation and opportunities will arise in areas that we have not thought of yet. It is hard to see how stopping polluting our fragile atmosphere is a bad thing.

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Ministry for the
Environment
Manatū Mo Te Taiao

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Summary

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

New Zealand should set its target in terms of what needs to be done and work as hard as we can in achieving that target. The uncertainty around doing nothing is much greater than the uncertainty around doing something, so we should chart the latter course.

Other comments

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

The consultation focuses far too strongly on the costs of taking action now and far too weakly on the costs of not taking action. As the problem of emissions is cumulative, the effects of emissions a non-linear function of those cumulative emissions, it makes sense to front-load action to reduce emissions. That is, we need to act quickly to bring all parts of government and society around to a plan to rapidly reduce emissions.