

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?

Guiding NZ over the long term in the global transition to a low emissions world. However "the long term" must not mean do very little now to avoid political disadvantage. This is a long term change for us and all humanity, but it is also a change that is urgent.

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?

The main saving we can achieve is in the area of transport. We must make public transport and freight movement less dependent on fossil fuels. This obviously means a large investment in electrification and enhancement of the rail network, and therefore less investment in roads. Increased use of coastal shipping will also increase energy efficiency of freight movement. We should look at the ambitious end of what is possible and set our target based on that.

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 is impossible to state. However the cost must not be borne by those who can least afford it. It is quite likely that a committed adjustment to a low emissions economy would reap benefits in that NZ would be amongst world leaders of technology that will become more and more attractive and necessary.

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?

The discussion document makes it clear that transport is one area where emissions can be reduced. There are actions being planned in this area that will in fact increase emissions:

For example the proposal to replace electric traction with diesels on the central section of the main trunk railway line between Wellington and Auckland. I am aware that there are different power systems in operation on the three electrified sections of the line, but engines can be obtained that will be able to run on different power systems (This is a necessity that is easily catered for to achieve efficient long distance rail movements in Europe). The emissions increase caused by putting diesel locomotives on this section of railway line will be in itself not great. However as part of a more comprehensive electrification of the rail network there would be considerable reductions in transport emissions.

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At present there are no passenger trains from Hamilton to Auckland. If the line was electrified then a rapid commuter system would be available to enable people to live further out of Auckland, ease the Auckland housing crisis and reduce the emissions created by Auckland's over-dependency on private cars.

The rail line to Mt. Maunganui is also a candidate for electrification to make freight and possibly passenger rail transport more rapid and again reduce emissions created by road use.

Similarly the Capital Connection to Palmerston North should not be discontinued and would benefit from electrification of the line.

The Wairarapa train from Wellington to Masterton is also an option for improving the speed of service and at the same time reducing car use and diesel emissions from the present engines. Wellington City is planning to remove its electric trolley bus system and replace it with diesel buses when there is the possibility of using light rail which if run from Johnsonville through the city would reduce the use of cars and hence reduce emissions.

Summary

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

If practical actions were evaluated now in order to set the target, then a realistic target could be set. What is relevant however is not the target but what is actually achieved. Do as much as we can, don't worry about the quality of our promises but ensure that our results are the best possible in the practical situations that appertain at the time.

Other comments

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

Future generations and quite possibly younger people alive today will bear the consequences of our actions, so responsibility and morality requires us to take all actions that are practical to stabilise our climate. It appears to me that this discussion document fails to exercise that responsibility and morality and indicates that we are seeking to avoid taking significant action to deal with the problem.

My subjective opinion is that climate change poses a greater and more immediate risk than appears to be recognised in the discussion document and it is the issue that outweighs all others. This paper is our country's response to what is probably the most significant threat that it has ever faced. In times of war all nations mobilise all their resources to ensure the preservation of their way of life. Though the threat from climate change does not have the immediacy of that posed by the World Wars of last century, it is actually a far greater and more significant threat than we faced at those times. I find this discussion paper fails to grasp this and is an exceedingly weak response to this reality.