

Climate Change Contribution Consultation,
Ministry for the Environment,
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Wellington 6143

Submission on New Zealand's Climate Change Contribution Target

I appreciate the opportunity to submit on this topic. I represent a small grass roots organisation called *It's Our Future - Christchurch* who are actively campaigning against the Trans Pacific Partnership and gathered 3000 people in Christchurch to march on the last National Day of Action against the TPP. We believe that the current economic paradigm, especially the Investor Rights Treaties such as the TPP, are very much the driver of the environmental devastation characterised by climate change.

The Discussion Document *New Zealand's Climate Change Target: Our Contribution to the New International Climate Change Agreement* states that "action on reduction of greenhouse gases worldwide is not strong enough" and "Paris is an opportunity to deliver an effective response" with "NZ keen to play its part." Having taken part in the Christchurch consultation meeting it is clear that there is a strong and deeply felt need to act swiftly and comprehensively on these sentiments. However the Discussion Document goes on to repetitively highlight the costs and so-called technological challenges and uncertainties as if we are hamstrung, making excuses in advance for why our response will be flat and unambitious, paying lip service to our children and the extreme challenges they will face because of the blinkered view of the world our economic system perpetuates.

I question whether there is not a sharp conflict of interest in Minister Grosser's responsibility for both Climate Change Issues and Trade, given that the Trans Pacific Partnership which the Minister is pushing for, would significantly inhibit our future ability to respond to climate change. For example, OceanaGold has already been active in submitting on climate change regulations and obviously has strong financial motives for a lax response for the 2020 contribution. Given that they have bought into Pacific Rim's Investor State Dispute with El Salvador over the right to pollute drinking water, it would be naive to think that New Zealand would not be the subject of future ISDS litigation just because it has not yet had to defend a case.

Investor State Dispute Settlement is a huge threat to every government's ability to respond to climate change and therefore pushing for Investor Rights Treaties such as the TPP and negotiating on international climate change issues are in direct opposition.

The Discussion Document focuses on the wrong questions, however here are my answers to them.

Q1 Do you agree with the objectives for the contribution & what is the most important to you?

No, I think there are significant objectives missing from this list including; what are the costs of doing nothing and what are the benefits of acting boldly? And what *really* ambitious *actual* reductions can be made?

We should not just be thinking about 'domestic and international audiences', but about whether

our contribution will be seen as *'fair and ambitious'* by the people who will be left dealing with the mess we have left them, the babies of today and their children? What legacy are we leaving?

The costs and impacts on society will not be managed at all if we leave it for climate change to decide how to mete this out, and the costs and impacts on society of doing too little are not even mentioned in the Discussion Document.

I believe New Zealand can have a much bigger impact than the size of our global emissions implies. New Zealand's emissions may be small on a global scale, but we are the *highest* emitters per capita. If we want to create a 'direction of travel' towards a long-term global transition to a low carbon economy the most important impact will be in how we educate and what concrete practical measures we take at home, giving people the message that we are working conscientiously and hard on dealing with the problem and that everyone's action is needed, as opposed to off-shoring our responsibility to overseas forestry, or onto future generations. Out of sight, out of mind will have less long-term impact and make the future costs of our next target even higher.

It may be true that "for the same cost it is possible to reduce more emissions by purchasing international units from overseas" but this does nothing to change the culture of the country whose people are the biggest emitters on the planet. We would have a bigger net & long-term effect by making some real effort here to reduce emissions at home and also build the ability to earn a lot of income as these technologies and know-how are a multi-billion dollar industry.

I don't accept that New Zealand has "circumstances that make it difficult to reduce emissions at home". For example, incentivising low-input agricultural practices would reduce emissions and increase the value of those exports, reducing the need for intensification. It is just a failure of the imagination to propose this is 'too hard'.

New Zealand has a proud history of leading the world in social and environmental change and in spite of Minister Grosser and the Prime Minister's assertions, New Zealanders *want* to be world leaders.

Q2 What do you think the nature of emissions and economy means for the level of target we set?

Quite simply, it means we need to change the basis of our economy. To be talking about a need to take action on climate change and to continue to see the dairy industry as the key to New Zealand's economic success is a nonsense. Not only is this industry our major emitter making us the highest emitters per capita on the planet, but it is also an industry that is suffering the most as climate change effects continue to worsen, making it not the key to our success but the key to our demise.

New Zealand has so many opportunities to grab in this situation but we seem to want to remain steadfastly blind to all of them. New Zealand is so abundantly blessed with clean energy sources – wind, sunlight and marine – that aiming for *world leadership in this arena* would be a far better choice, morally, environmentally and economically.

Economic institutes suggest New Zealand could have between \$22 billion (Price Waterhouse Coopers) and \$150 billion (Investment New Zealand) high-value, low-carbon export economy by

2025 if we concentrate on a clean energy, clean economy¹. In a clean economy we support our own companies – 60 of whom Investment New Zealand considers world class – and we look to dominate the \$260 billion world renewable energy market providing tens of thousands of real, purposeful, long-term jobs for New Zealanders which enhance our environment and cut our dependence on oil imports.

Q3 What level of cost is appropriate? Household consumption reduction?

This just seems like the most ridiculous of questions – what level of cost is appropriate for maintaining the ability for life to continue on the planet? Oh gosh it's too expensive, maybe we could just pay half. It also seems deliberately designed, by putting a figure on annual household consumption reduction, to scare people into opting for the lowest target contribution. Looking at the Investment New Zealand's analysis outlined above, there could be a significant household boost by investing in a clean economy.

There are also various mechanisms that can offset household costs like a revenue neutral carbon tax channelling the income raised back to families and small businesses through income tax reductions. This question is disingenuous as it neglects the costs of doing nothing and the cost *savings* in health and environmental clean-up spending to name only two, that focusing on a clean economy would provide.

Q4 Of the opportunities which do you think are most likely to occur or be most important for NZ?

As expressed previously, I believe the opportunities for New Zealand are enormous and ignoring them will cost us more than any target to contributions would. The clean technology sector is already massive and growing very quickly. This would provide more benefit for New Zealand in every way than continuing with the anachronistic economic policy of fossil fuelled farming we are pursuing.

We should be implementing a moratorium on new dairy as these international climate change agreements have sought to encourage forestry and discourage deforestation yet New Zealand has continued converting forest to dairy.

Concentrating on the 'low-hanging fruit' represented by reductions in emissions caused by waste and transport would have massive spin-off effects in public education and the cultural drive to focus on reducing our emissions together as a country. We have the potential to reduce our transport emissions through greater investment in public transport and electric cars. Our waste emissions, presumably made up mainly of methane emissions from organic waste decomposition, could be channelled back into food resilience and agriculture measures, growing food locally in healthy, rich compost, increasing the awareness of the current soil degradation crisis and acting to mitigate it.

Just as the causes of climate change are complex and inter-related, so too are the solutions. The \$52 billion paid to offshore carbon markets to 'reach' our current target of 5% below 1990 GHG emissions levels would have been better spent investing in our own country. Sure the total cost to reach our target may have been more, but investing the money *here* will result in massive dividends when we are able to export our knowledge and technology offshore rather than our tax

¹ *The Future is Here New Jobs, New Prosperity and a New Clean Economy* page 7 retrieved 28/01/14 from: <http://viewer.zmags.com/publication/9c3e8878#/9c3e8878/6>

dollars.

Q5 How should NZ take into account the future uncertainties of technologies and costs when setting its target?

New Zealand should completely disregard future uncertainties of technologies and costs and work with what we know to exist right now. The continual focus on the unknowns make it look like this government is only concerned about how we will pay for the cost of continued emitting. We can calculate with the technology that currently exists how much emissions we could materially reduce. Much of this work has already been done and the technology and know how is here and now and working.

Investing \$45 million into the GRA is again, a misuse of public funds. We already know that lower inputs into agriculture reduce emissions and increase the value of the end product. Increases in food production can be more effectively and safely met by the use of permaculture practices and moving away from high protein diets, simultaneously leading to reductions in bowel cancer and reducing health system costs. Stalling action by spending large amounts of money on identifying solutions that may not produce results is just stalling action. And if those solutions do produce results, the effects are negated by the effect of then feeling justified in continued agricultural intensification. We should work with what we know to be true and viable right now.

Prioritising import and infrastructure for electric bikes and vehicles; shifting investment from road-building into public transport; city design around pedestrians & cyclists; changes in waste management; Bio-diesel from forestry industry waste; shutting Huntly power station; 100% renewable energy; ending subsidies for fossil fuel industries; discontinuing the pursuit of fossil fuel extraction; moving to low-input agriculture; reforming electricity markets; scrapping the ineffectual ETS and replacing it with a revenue neutral carbon tax; increasing investment in geothermal and marine energy projects; driving New Zealand towards world leadership in clean economy technologies... these are some of the certainties we should be working with when we set our target.

What should New Zealand's climate change contribution be?

The only real thing stopping New Zealand from a climate change contribution target that reflects the seriousness and urgency of the situation and a genuine effort to act as custodians of the natural world to pass on to future generations rather than plundering it for our own short-lived pleasure-seeking, is political will.

I don't believe that the Trans Pacific Partnership is compatible with climate change mitigation measures, given the over-reaching power of the fossil fuel and other polluting industries as they already stand.

But if this consultation process is a serious attempt to listen and consider the voices of the people, then I would hope that we would be focussing on the potential benefits for New Zealand of a truly ambitious target rather than the costs. I would like to see New Zealand commit to a 40% reduction on 1990 levels.

On behalf of It's Our Future – Christchurch

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