

From: Karen du Fresne

Setting New Zealand's post-2020 climate change target

Submission

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To Hon Tim Groser, Minister for Climate Change Issues

I ask you to adopt a minimum target of a 40% reduction in net emissions below 1990 levels by 2030 - the minimum contribution required to keep us under 2 degrees global warming. I also want the government to call for a global zero carbon target, and walk the talk by committing to a pathway towards zero CO2 emissions by 2050 or earlier.

I attended the consultation meeting in Nelson on 13 May, and in both the Ministry presentation and the consultation document action on climate change was portrayed solely in terms of its cost to NZ households. They failed to quantify how much it will cost if we don't take adequate action. Not only is this misleading, but it comes across as wilful blindness when communities and individual households (in Nelson and elsewhere) are already dealing with the costs of extreme weather events which result from an increasingly unstable and unpredictable climate.

Climate change is a threat to our economy, especially those sectors that are worst affected by climate extremes, like farming and fisheries. Our farmers are most vulnerable to climate change, and those farmers who are actively working towards more sustainable practices, such as organic farming, must be supported. I do not agree that we need to maintain our current numbers of livestock at all cost. We could be producing organic dairy products on a far greater scale, for a premium price, and reduce stock numbers and emissions at the same time. Organic farming would also reduce our reliance on imported fertilisers.

I urge the government to drop all plans to further develop our fossil fuel reserves, and to halt all fracking and deep sea exploratory drilling immediately. These practices pose major environmental risks, and the world can only afford to burn 20% of currently explored reserves. In the situation we are in we should solely focus on the development of renewable energy resources.

Taking an active stance on emissions reductions, developing clean-tech solutions to climate change and capitalising on these solutions would put us at the forefront of the worldwide shift to a low carbon economy, giving us an economic advantage. Acting on climate change should be seen an investment in our future, and I am disappointed at the lack of vision in the consultation document.

It is pathetic for us to be downplaying our responsibility for climate change by saying that New Zealand is too small to make a difference! The world is crying out now for leadership and solutions. We have taken pride over the years in "punching above our weight", and I want New Zealand to take an active role by setting an ambitious target, and backing this up with a credible national strategy for how we plan to achieve this. I want climate change legislation that holds the government accountable for reducing emissions. I want an independent Climate Commission that is adequately funded and has the powers to monitor progress effectively. I also want this current government to establish a cross-party climate working group and an on-going programme to engage meaningfully with New Zealanders, many of whom are already working on local initiatives to reduce emissions and live more sustainably.

Climate change is the defining issue of our time. I would like to remind you that this is not some kind of academic exercise, and that we don't have the luxury of time while we drag our feet and squabble over details. Our Pacific Island neighbours, whom we should be actively supporting, are already experiencing major issues because of rising sea levels. Here in New Zealand we have had a succession of adverse weather events as a result of an increasingly unstable and unpredictable climate, and it's costing our communities dearly. New Zealanders showed their desire for an ambitious emissions reduction target at the last round of public consultations in 2009. We need and deserve a government with the courage to act!

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