

Quakers

The Religious Society of Friends - Te Hāhi Tūhauwiri
Aotearoa/New Zealand

18 July 2018

Submission to the New Zealand Government Consultation on the Zero Carbon Bill

1 Introduction

Climate change is dramatically changing the world we love. It's putting our homes, our land and our people at risk. Failure to act on climate change results in great injustice. The change has mainly been caused by rich, industrialised countries, yet the people being hit the hardest are largely those in poor countries, who didn't cause the problem. They are most vulnerable to extreme weather events, failed crops, dried up rivers, and loss of their homes. It is also a great intergenerational injustice because it is passing on a major problem to our children and grandchildren. Inaction on our part can only exacerbate the problem and increase the costs.

As a leading developed nation in the Pacific, New Zealand has a moral duty to support our global neighbours who are some of the most at-risk in the world.

Furthermore, we made a promise to the rest of the world under the Paris Agreement that we will do our bit to tackle this global challenge, so we need to establish plans to achieve our emissions-reduction targets. A Zero Carbon Act for New Zealand is imperative

For Quakers, taking meaningful action on climate change is an essential part of loving our global neighbours, caring for creation and stewarding our resources for future generations.

2 A Just Transition

We feel strongly that principles of climate justice and fairness must be embedded within a Zero Carbon Act, and that it must also reflect a commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

By *fairness*, we mean giving careful consideration to equity issues, such as intergenerational justice and the principles of a "just transition". In practice, this means ensuring that vulnerable communities are supported by the policies that stem from a Zero Carbon Act, and that a just transition is planned for regions and workers in industries where job losses will occur. Planning and clear signalling should be done as early as possible to enable communities and businesses to plan for the impact and opportunities of emission reduction policies. We need to ensure that policies increase economic equity to ensure the essential trust from the community.

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In particular, the targets and plans set in place by this legislation should be to consider the needs of future generations of people and other life on the planet. A holistic approach to the environmental impact of climate change policies is important.

Further, there must be engagement with the people of New Zealand, recognising that everyone has both a stake in the outcome and a crucial contribution to make. In the process the Zero Carbon Act must honour Te Tiriti through meaningful partnership between iwi and the Crown to actively protect Māori rights and rangatiratanga over their own interests, and be informed by tikanga Māori, Māori worldviews towards climate change.

At the same time, the need for consultation must be balanced by the need for urgency in starting down the path towards a carbon neutral society.

3. The 2050 target

We support the third option for a 2050 target of net zero emissions across all greenhouse gases by 2050 with some important caveats. The *Our Climate Your Say* options are confusing in that they force people to choose between the scientific approach of recognising the difference between long-lived greenhouse gases (GHG) such as CO₂ vs short-lived gases such as methane, and a seemingly more ambitious target of net zero emissions across all gases by 2050.

The different treatment of gases should lead to Different Abatement Obligations, so that those who emit short-lived gases would be obliged to offset them with short-term offsets (such as pine trees which have about the same life-time as methane) and those who emit long-lived gases would be obliged to offset them with permanent offsets (such as native forests). This means the emissions of each gas should either be reduced or be offset in accordance with its inherent characteristics.

We support a target of reducing *overall* greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050, but doing so in a way that treats the different gases appropriately. This means achieving *negative* long-lived gas emissions, while reducing short-lived gas emissions to sustainable levels. This would balance out to net zero across all gases, but in the most impactful way possible.

New Zealand should aim for a sustainable level of short-lived emissions, which fits with the Paris Agreement goals to keep global warming well below 2C, striving to 1.5C. We believe it will be the role of the Climate Change Commission to advise on where these levels should be set.

In doing this there is a need to maintain a sense of immediacy in that the critical factor is accumulative effect, and that early action will be far more effective than later action. We support working with a 2020 to 2050 period to bring into focus the need for immediacy in reducing carbon emissions and reducing the inclination to defer action. A 2020 to 2050 period strengthens focus on policy and public understanding for reducing carbon emissions in the short and longer terms.

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New Zealand should be required to meet its 2050 target through domestic emissions reductions only. Relying on international carbon credits (even if the credits have integrity) creates uncertainty about what reductions need to be achieved here in New Zealand. It also means we are investing in other countries' low emission transitions, rather than our own.

This does not mean preventing New Zealand from purchasing international carbon credits as an additional contribution to global mitigation efforts, however. Purchasing credits helps other countries finance their transition to a zero-carbon economy, and is a way for New Zealand, as a developed nation, to look after our global neighbours.

4. Government response

The Zero Carbon Bill should require Government to set out plans within a certain timeframe to achieve the emissions budgets, and this time frame should be no more than 12 months after an emissions budget has been set. While the UK's Climate Change Act provides a strong model for New Zealand in many respects, a weakness is that it does not set clear timeframes for the government to make policy plans to meet future emission budgets. We should learn from this and ensure a Zero Carbon Act has a strict time frame for setting out policy plans and clearly defined interim targets, for example every five years.

Local government needs to be empowered as full partners with central government including being able to legislate for their areas of responsibility to support the realisation of the targets.

Of key importance when setting plans to make budgets, is adhering to the principles outlined under section 1: *A Just Transition*: fairness, equity, environmental sustainability, and a commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

It is also important that all governments engage with the community, ensuring that they are well informed of developments and have avenues to contribute their views. The community also needs encouragement and guidance to be engaged in achieving the targets. This may involve adapting lifestyles to minimise demand for emission generating products and services, and supporting the policies, leaders, technologies, services and businesses that promote the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

5. Climate Change Commission

We support the functions of the proposed Climate Commission, namely, providing expert advice; monitoring our progress; and holding the government to account.

Transparency needs to be central to its operation, to enable the public to have easy access to its monitoring activities.

We believe that the Commission should consist of technical and policy experts, rather than stakeholders. It is imperative that our policy actions are in line with the latest science and with sound policy principles.

Furthermore, it is important that the Commission should not be a decision-making body. A Commission with decision-making powers is less effective as a watchdog; there is a conflict of interest in holding itself to account over its own policy decisions. Rather elected officials need to be responsible for making plans and meeting Zero Carbon Act targets to maintain democratic responsibility.

Finally, it is important that our transition to a net zero emissions economy is comprehensive and coordinated across all sectors; overall responsibility for these plans should lie with the government.

6. Adapting to the impacts of climate change

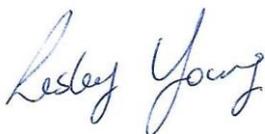
We feel strongly that a framework for adaptation (i.e. addressing the impacts of climate change, such as droughts and sea level rise) should be included in the Zero Carbon Act, and that the Climate Change Commission should contribute its expertise to our adaptation response. This may require a separate expert working group.

We support the government being required to prepare a national climate risk assessment, and a national policy plan to address these risks. A monitoring and reporting framework is also important.

We also support the proposal to set up a targeted adaptation reporting power that could see specific organisations share information on their exposure to climate change risks.

7. Conclusion

This Zero Carbon Bill represents a major step forward in New Zealand's progress in addressing climate change and all the ramifications involved, and it is important that it is established in a fashion that it engages the whole country in a determined effort to drive towards a future which honours our commitment to succeeding generations.



Lesley Young
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