

# Transition Valley 473: Initiating Group

29<sup>th</sup> May 2015

Climate Change Contribution Consultation

Ministry for the Environment

PO Box 10362

Wellington 6143

## **Submission to the *Climate Change Contribution Consultation***

*Emailed as PDF to [climate.contribution@mfe.govt.nz](mailto:climate.contribution@mfe.govt.nz)*

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Thank you for the opportunity to submit on the *Climate Change Contribution Consultation Document*

We are a group of residents from North East Valley and its surrounding suburbs in Dunedin. Our aim is to help this community on its transition journey - coping with the climate, energy and economic changes that are coming. Our objectives are to provide information about these issues, to work cooperatively with community groups and council, to foster practical skill sharing in the community, and to instigate and support relevant community projects. We are open to all residents in the area as well as supporters from other areas. The TV473 group comprises an Initiating Group as well as specific focused Working Groups who are engaged in practical activities such as fruit preserving, tree planting, biodiversity monitoring, bike fix it workshops and household energy audits.

***This submission is from the Transition Valley 473 Initiating Group. Please send correspondence to Maureen Howard.***

## Preamble

As Transition Valley 473 we are particularly interested in the ability of communities to mitigate and adapt to climate change, as well our country's global responsibility to respond appropriately to the challenges of climate change.

### Q1. a. Do you agree with the above objectives for our contribution?

Congratulations for making a start on a set of objectives. We partially agree to the objectives provided in the Consultation Document. However we believe that New Zealand should be a leader rather than a follower in terms of its targets and the means by which we will successfully meet those targets.

#### *In terms of Objective 1*

Our targets need to be fair, ambitious and credible – here in NZ and also internationally. It is not enough to be 'seen' to be fair and ambitious. What is needed is that our contribution and actions actually 'are' fair and ambitious. This distinction is important.

We note that the targets in this document are not sufficiently ambitious to set a good example to the rest of the world about what level of targets are required.

We also need to do more than our 'fair share'. We want actual leadership from Government - as a model, as well as nationally and internationally.

For example it is not acceptable to expect other countries to lead the way in terms of mitigating climate change. As a small country we possess a certain agility that allows us to make changes that other countries find hard. In addition we are a first world nation and as such have much better ability to reduce than countries that are already using very little, and actually need to be allowed to increase their emissions to implement sustainability goals such as renewable energy sources and low carbon transport infrastructure. New Zealand has a proud history of leading the way – the vote for women, nuclear disarmament, progressive voting systems to name a few examples. We are a nation of leaders – not followers.

We also note that if part of our commitment to meet targets requires us to purchase carbon credits, then this is completely unacceptable. We are taking into account that we are a first world country and that developing nations cannot respond as we can.

#### *In terms of Objective Two*

The Consultation Document has failed to calculate the costs to the New Zealand economy, social fabric and wellbeing of residents and businesses of *not* doing enough to mitigate climate change.

The impacts of climate change are global. We cannot isolate ourselves with regard to the costs to our society alone. Failure to act sufficiently to keep global warming to less than 2 degrees C will have huge costs (social, economic, environmental) that are **completely ignored in this document!**

Costs provided in this Consultation Document are vague and need to be clarified.

In addition there is no mention in the Consultation Document of the *benefits* of new technologies and the economic advantages they will bring if we lead the way.

At the very least we want to see the triple bottom line being addressed.

In terms of cost of meeting our targets and the impacts on householders, the government should ensure that less well off households are not paying as much as better off households. Action to meet climate change targets should be used as a tool to reduce inequality of wealth, not increase it.

### *In terms of Objective Three*

The long term is too long and partially responsible for so much inaction. We believe that we need to make changes now and over the short term. The longer we delay action (through having targets without annual timelined action pathways) the more mitigating climate change is going to cost our country, and the harder it is going to be for us to actually achieve our set targets. Another reason for acting now is that it is easier to make changes while the economy is buoyant than when it is not.

SO this requires that

- The government must provide an effective annual pathway for us to make the transition to achieve the stated objectives. These must be achievable steps.

Finally, in Objective Three it is implicit in the terminology (“small open economy”, “need to be ready for a world”) that we are a small passive player. We disagree. New Zealand should not be watching to see what will happen. New Zealand should be leading. *Our contribution* should be as a model sending a clear signal of how nations should be acting to mitigate climate change as well as giving New Zealanders clear guidance on how to act.

### **Q1.b. What is most important?**

The most important objective for our contribution is LEADERSHIP. This should take three forms

1. The Government itself providing leadership as a model of sustainability
2. The Government leading nationally – creating an environment where businesses and households understand the implications of climate change and know what is required in terms of personal and national action.
3. The Government providing leadership internationally – setting an example to other countries about what is needed to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions to stay within the globally agreed limit of 2degC.

We will deal with each of these in turn.

1. Government as a leader and model of meeting low GHG targets. For example the Government MPs can lead by example by analysing their fuel use, travel and seek ways that they can reduce their emissions.
2. Government leadership at the national level -
  - We need the Government to take leadership, to educate the public about climate change, our contribution and also the importance of taking action on this issue.
  - We need the Government to require issues around climate change to be taught as part of the curriculum in educational institutions, including schools, as is developmentally appropriate.
  - The Government should take leadership in educating the people of New Zealand around these issues, like they have done in the past with the Drink Driving Campaign, Be a Tidy Kiwi Campaign, the Belt Up Campaign and the Stop Smoking Campaign. An education programme around climate change should include discussion and suggestion about what individuals and whanau, businesses and institutions: all people can do as understanding

about consequences of not doing enough or postponing action grows, so we are not scaring people into inaction. To present a positive campaign around Climate Change, the government could focus on benefits for health – like healthy transport, community development, and healthy unprocessed food.

- The Government need to cease to allow new fossil fuel exploration on land or waters. How is it consistent to have climate mitigation objectives when the government is planning more coalmining and supporting deepsea oil drilling in NZ waters? The government needs to develop national goals that are consistent with its Climate Change targets. In particular, all new exploration of fossil fuels within and in the waters of New Zealand must cease immediately.
  - The Government needs to give clear signals to businesses so that they can pursue sustainable economic development models that are low carbon. Businesses need security to do this
  - This requires annual targets set by government NOW – so that businesses can have security to make the transition. The current targets are too far out and they will not assist with any transition.
  - It is essential that the Government seek cross party support so that businesses have security across changing governments.
  - There needs to be much more emphasis on communication and working together between departments within the government. At the moment, every department has its budget and is siloed and operating independently. Climate Change will affect every department – from decisions around transportation, to food production.
  - We need a Government Body for Climate Change.
  - Costs and benefits need to be shared across communities in ways that the less well off are not disadvantaged. People and industries who have more impact should pay more. Industries that contribute the most to climate change should pay more. Agricultural greenhouse pollutants must also be addressed. We need policies that reduce our economic reliance on ruminant livestock, and encourage diversification, local food security and better farming practices (organic/biodynamic). In New Zealand healthy eating, including increased plant and less red meat and animal fat consumption, would reduce agricultural GHG emissions, improve water quality and lead to health benefits, eg reduced rates of bowel cancer and heart disease.

3. The Government needs to lead internationally and set ambitious targets. There are many reasons why we should take a leadership role in setting ambitious targets for climate change mitigation.

- We are on the Security Council which gives us influence above our size. We are a First World Country.
- We have a good lifestyle here in New Zealand that could become low carbon without too much difficulty.
- We have scientists working in NZ universities and other institutions with research already showing we can meet ambitious targets by Carbon sequestration with planting forests on marginal land and producing biochar from forest and other waste for use as fertiliser.
- We attract and collaborate on building relevant knowledge with researchers from other countries.
- We are a small country with diverse geography, we can live locally and have a good life. Unlike us, developing nations need to increase their emissions so that they can bring in the necessary infrastructure to achieve a good quality of life that is based on low carbon alternatives.

- New Zealand has taken leadership in the past and we can do it again.
- We have a responsibility to our Pacific neighbours who will be most affected by climate change.
- Finally, the impacts of a country are not limited to that country. We all benefit by saving the Amazon.
  - Targets need to be set by what the science says is needed to stay within 2degC – not by social/economic/political goals. Climate change is a physical phenomenon and targets need to meet this. We refer to the findings of the 5<sup>th</sup> IPCC report.
  - We believe that the government must set the target of 90% reduction in CO2e from 1990 levels by 2050 (level required by IPCC findings)
  - *and*
  - We need annual targets and pathways of action *beginning now* so that there is a clear pathway to us meeting this target.

**Q2. What do you think the nature of New Zealand's emissions and economy means for the level of target that we set?**

- Firstly, the Government needs to choose a target that supports the IPCC's latest findings and their scientific basis for targets rather than setting targets based on economic targets. Climate change is a physical fact and we cannot have an economy without an environment. Targets need to be set by what the science says is needed to stay within 2degC – not by social/economic/political goals.
- Secondly, we do not think that the targets the Government has set are sufficient. We believe that the Government must set the target of 90% reduction in CO2e from 1990 levels by 2050 (level required by IPCC findings). For example, since we are close to 80% renewable electricity we can increase to 100% renewables, we need to immediately commit to zero new fossil fuel exploration given that only 1/5 of current known reserves can be burned for our planet to stay within the 2 degree C limit.
- Thirdly, targets *must* include annual goals. According to scientific evidence, 7% reduction CO2 emission per annum Associate Professor Bob Lloyd, University of Otago).

Costs and impacts are determined in this Consultation Document without regard to connections between activities. Every department has its budget and is siloed and operating independently. Ecological and systems research shows that this is not how the world works.

**Q3. What level of cost is appropriate for New Zealand to reduce its greenhouse emissions? For example what would be a reasonable reduction in annual household consumption?**

This is a very leading question and in our opinion is the wrong question to ask. This Consultation Document has not measured the costs of *not acting* to mitigate climate change and how increased global emissions will reduce the quality of life for us all. The cost of not doing anything is very important.

- We would like a detailed assessment of the cost of not doing anything.

Failing to act sufficiently to mitigate climate change will have far reaching negative effects to health and well being of New Zealanders.

- We need other measures than simple cost to households. The UN Human Development Index is a better measure – looking at measures of happiness, health and wellbeing. For example, quality of life in NZ is typically higher, even though people may earn less than in other countries

Climate change has been caused by the activities of the wealthy and not the poor. Consider flying. Only 5% of all the people alive today have ever flown on an aeroplane. Wealthy people fly by far the most.

- Given the rapidly rising inequality of wealth in New Zealand and the many social ills that are associated with this, we would like to see all the people who are living on higher than average income take a cut rather than those at the bottom. In particular, the very wealthy should pay by far the most. This is fair and equitable.

To find out more about the many social ills of financial inequality within a country – we refer you to *The Spirit Level* by Richard G. Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, published in 2009 by Allen Lane.

#### **Q4. Of these opportunities which do you think are the more likely to occur, or to be most important for New Zealand?**

- We support all of the ‘new opportunities’ listed in the Consultation Document (p15), with the caveat that with regard to the final part of this section we want New Zealand to be aligned with the global transition in terms of best practice with other countries and to be front runners rather than being followers in the global transition.
- We also make the emphasis that in addition to pursuing new opportunities that expand our renewables and low carbon sectors, we also need to be reducing our reliance on industries and practices that use fossil fuels.

We add the following comments and recommendations to New Opportunities.

- We are very cautious about recommending biofuels as a transition fuel. Biofuels rely on the combustion engine and any new industry that does not take us away from this technology continues to provide an opportunity for the burning of fossil fuels. If we use biofuels we need to be careful that the fuel is not used to power private vehicles. It should be strictly used for vehicles that are essential (eg freighters, tractors) and that cannot currently be electrified. Importantly, biofuels should only be produced using waste products and not from arable land.
- We need to be focusing on excellent public transport systems that are by nature low carbon and will give householders the confidence to give up their own vehicles
- We should encourage car share schemes within cities
- We should be encouraging cycling with excellent cycleways that support a variety of ages and abilities. In addition, nationwide education on safe cycling is needed.
- We need to encourage vehicle conversions to electric as well as providing an infrastructure that supports electric vehicles. For example, here in Dunedin, most residents could be using electric buses or electric cars. The distances are short.
- We applaud the Discussion Document's mention of electric vehicles. We point out that electric technology does not just apply to cars. We also need to include electric bikes. There

are many advantages of electric bikes over the electric car. People and freight could use electric rail systems in towns and for longer distances.

- We support increased use of bicycles and improving cycleways, as well as pedestrian access – where walking and cycling also have health co-benefits.
- We support climate friendly home heating
- We do not support cruise ships and the great increase that we are seeing in this. Cruise ships, like flying have a huge carbon footprint even compared to flying. For some, they are becoming a lifestyle choice, one that is completely unsustainable.
- We see new opportunities at the local level that will reduce carbon emissions and allow New Zealand to reach its Climate Change Target. We support a distributed regional economy which gives resilience to regions and community, reducing many of their needs locally and providing employment locally based on local renewable resources. For example, an unfettered free market economy means that small shops shut as larger ones can sell their products more cheaply. This disadvantages people living without cars. In Dunedin the central city hardware shop has shut and now the only place to go is Mitre 10 in the south end of the city which is two bus trips away from us in North East Valley (approximately 6 kms). On a national scale, due to an unfettered free market economy we are planning to outsource hospital meals to an outfit in Auckland. This will increase CO2 emissions.
- In addition to supporting most of the New Opportunities outlined on P 15, we support suggestions for an effective climate action plan that is in submissions from Ora Taiao, Greenpeace, Generation Zero and Climate Justice Taranaki.

#### **Q5. How should New Zealand take into account the future uncertainties of technologies and costs when setting its target?**

We need to foster innovation that is based on renewable generation technologies and not hold with the old sunset/dinosaur technologies that rely on fossil fuel extraction.

- The government need to have plans and strategies that are laid out year by year so that we can achieve our targets by 2030.
- The government needs to give clear signals to local body councils and businesses so that they can pursue sustainable economic development models that are low carbon.

Businesses need security to do this

1. This requires annual targets set by government NOW – so that businesses can have security to make the transition. The current targets are too far out and they will not assist with any transition.
2. It is essential that the government seek cross party support so that businesses have security across changing governments.
3. There needs to be much more emphasis on communication and working together between departments within the government. At the moment, every department has its budget and is siloed and operating independently. Climate Change will affect every department – from decisions around transportation, to food production.
4. We need a Government Body for Climate Change.
5. Costs and benefits need to be shared across communities in ways that the less well off are not disadvantaged. People and industries who have more impact should pay more. Industries that contribute the most to climate change should pay more. Agricultural greenhouse pollutants must also be addressed. We need policies that reduce our economic reliance on ruminant livestock, and

encourage diversification, local food security and better farming practices (organic/biodynamic). In New Zealand healthy eating, including increased plant and less red meat and animal fat consumption, would reduce agricultural GHG emissions, improve water quality and lead to health benefits, eg reduced rates of bowel cancer and heart disease.

6. Finally, we do not support the mechanism of an emissions trading scheme as it becomes something that some people speculate on and make money on like any other commodity, while not actually contributing usefully to the environment, economy of society.

**Thank you** for this opportunity to participate in setting New Zealand's Climate Change Target. Very little time was given to individuals and communities to respond to the Discussion Document. Many people will not have time to respond – or even had the opportunity to find out about this submission process. We hope that you will weigh this into consideration when reviewing the numbers and quality of submissions.

We would like to finish with a quote that we think encapsulates the essential nature of the challenge of climate change, and why this is a global issue, and why it is so important that New Zealand positions itself to lead internationally rather than just 'look after its own'.

*When you try to pick up anything by itself you find that it is hitched to everything else in the universe.*

John Muir