

## Submission on the Climate Change Response (Zero Carbon) Amendment Bill

Les Jones

climatefirstnz

les@evnz.org

I wish to make four main points

1. The proposed reductions in greenhouse gases in New Zealand are fundamentally inadequate to reduce emissions enough to avert catastrophic global climate effects.
2. The methods that the Bill proposes are not fair in that the reduction burden is unequal and what is just as important, is perceived to be unequal. This means that those who see others getting an easy ride, will be resentful and make no effort to reduce their own emissions. This operates at two levels: firstly, between countries, and secondly, between sectors within New Zealand.
3. The repercussions for a government which fails to meet one of the carbon budgets are feeble. In other words, the Bill has no teeth to enforce the reduction targets
4. The 5- year budgets are yet another 'fudge' enabling governments to postpone the real and severe reductions required. I believe that we know right now what needs to be done, therefore, we should state it clearly right at the outset, along with the annual milestones from now until 2050

### 1. Inadequate target

The proposed targets are based on the IPCC Special Report 1.5 (2018). There exists as well, The UNEP "Gap" Report which annually calculates the growing gap between effects of the combined Paris Agreement NDCs and the required global reduction needed to keep the world under a 1.5 degree temperature rise. This gap has grown year by year, from 17 Gtn in 2016 to 32 Gtn in 2018, and the 2019 one is imminent. As well, the GAP Report gives an emissions figure the world needs to reach in 2030. This was, for all gases, in the 2018 report, a reduction from 52 GTn in 2017, down to 24 Gtn by 2030, a huge fall, especially considering that world emissions are yet to plateau, let alone fall.

The radical group, Extinction Rebellion, are asking for net zero by 2025, but this is obviously absurd, especially in New Zealand where net emissions have risen by 56 % since 1990, compared to the UK which has reduced net emissions by 41% over the same period. I appreciate that the Government is now talking about only a 1.5 degree target and no longer considering staying below 2 degrees; this is progress. However, the mere existence of Extinction Rebellion shows that many young people are quite angry about the dire prospects for them in the heating world they are growing up into.

The target we should be aiming at is somewhere between net zero by 2025 and net zero by 2050, but as time passes, with little evidence of reductions at all, the required net zero target is moving forward year by year. Nowhere is the idea of moving to negative net emissions in New Zealand mentioned, but I believe, with our large forest sink, that it is possible and would send a huge message to the world.

## 2. Lack of fairness

The fundamental idea of fairness is, I believe, that each individual on earth has the right to emit an equal amount of greenhouse gas. This equality is not necessary for *wealth*, but it is for the *climate*, because we all share the atmospheric commons, and if one person sees another emitting more than them then they will make no effort to reduce their own emissions. Now, New Zealanders emit nearly twice the world average for all gases, but seven times the world average for methane. Thus, the Zero Carbon Bill, in proposing that New Zealand merely adhere to the same target as the world as a whole, is avoiding having us make our 'fair' contribution. In the Explanatory note to the Bill, line three of the General policy statement, there is a word missing, "FAIR". It should read "stable climate change policies that **fairly** contribute to the global effort" If New Zealand emits above the world average then its reductions should be steeper than those countries emitting at or below the world per-person average. The result would then be that we emit at the world average, thus making our "fair contribution"

To do some calculations: NZ has 0.062% of the world's population therefore should be entitled to emit 0.062% of the world's emissions. If we take Methane alone, which makes up 16% of world emissions or 8.32 billion tonnes. The 10% reduction proposed would bring this down to 7.48 Gtns in 2030. Taking the midpoint of the proposed 24-47% reduction by 2050 (i.e. -36 %) would give 5.32 Gtns Methane emissions allowed globally in 2050. Now New Zealand at 0.062% would be allowed 3.299 Million tonnes per year (0.062% of 5.32 Gtn). However, at the moment we emit 34.1. The required reduction to achieve this would be 90.3 % below the current level, not a mere 24-47% reduction.

The second way that the Bill's proposed reductions are not fair is within New Zealand itself. Farmers have been given a named gross reduction target, although 24-47% is pretty vague, yet the other gases target, mainly for city dwellers is a net one and the severity of it depends largely on the size of the offset (purchased credits/forest sink).

To do some calculations around this: The largest our forest sink has ever been was 33 Mtns in 1994, this from 1.7 million hectares. I calculate that if the billion trees were planted, all in plantation forest, they would cover 900,000 hectares, potentially 17 Mtns of offset max. Now, given that forests now only sequester 23 Mtns, and that harvesting is cyclical, that still gives a potential maximum sink of 50 Mtns. It is sobering to note that our total other gases emissions in the last inventory were 46 Mtns, which means that potentially no cuts would be needed at all in other gases emissions between now and 2050. This is highly unfair on livestock farmers and the fact that much of the extra forests would be on their land, is rubbing salt in the wound.

So, we have the hopeless situation where the sector which has to make the biggest cuts is the one which has no access to offsets because methane can't be sequestered by forests. I suggest that this is so unfair that it would be politically impossible to implement it.

I would like to suggest, and have in previous submissions, such as to the Productivity Commission, a completely different and revolutionary approach. It revolves around what I call the Required Emissions Reduction Pathway (RERP). There is plentiful explanation on my website [climatefirstnz.org](http://climatefirstnz.org)

This involves defining an exact pathway from now to the desired all gases target. All sectors are then immediately brought into a \$100 per tonne carbon tax scheme, including livestock farmers. Any business/farm which adheres to this reduction line would be tax neutral. All farms/businesses would start in year one on the RERP, therefore pay nothing. A farmer who lowered emissions by afforesting some pasture (reducing animal emissions and increasing sequestration) and stayed on the RERP line

would neither pay tax nor receive credits. A farmer who reduced below the line would get a pay-out while one who did nothing would pay tax according to how far they were above the RERP line. For sheep farmers this could be a goldmine, and even profitable for dairy farming.

This scheme incentivises livestock farmers to plant the trees needed to increase our forest sink, rather than punishes them for emitting the methane which they have no way of offsetting. By finding a way of reducing stock numbers, and thus reducing methane emissions while at the same time increasing afforestation, all the while not affecting a farmer's profitability, we have a win-win-win solution. It could even get New Zealand to be the first country in the world to be a net carbon sink.

**3. The Bill's lack of enforcement ability:** Many other submitters have addressed this issue, notably Greenpeace. My only additional comment would be that if emission reduction were incentivised as above rather than punished, the Zero Carbon Bill would not need strong powers of enforcement, because the reductions would just happen!

**4. Five-year budgets:** The RERP scheme would not need these because the pathway is clearly delineated from day one. The importance of this cannot be over-emphasised. Because NZ is so small, the only effect that we can have on the world is as an example. Having a clear long-term pathway which we stuck to in the early years would send a powerful message to the world that here was a country, emitting well above the world average, with an emissions profile having seemingly intractable reduction difficulties (compared to Australia and the UK for example), which was leading the world towards a post-carbon future.

Les Jones