

26 March 2021

Attn: Submissions analysis team
Climate Change Commission
PO Box 24448
Wellington 6142

Wellington City Council submission on Climate Action for Aotearoa

The Wellington City Council (WCC) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the Climate Change Commission's first advice to government. This is a significant step in turning New Zealand's commitment to addressing the climate change emergency into both action and global leadership.

Strong action on climate change both globally and locally is essential for Wellington to continue to prosper as an attractive, innovative, and creative city for residents, businesses, and visitors. Wellington provides a low carbon lifestyle that is increasingly a factor for people choosing where they live and work. As a coastal city we are conscious of the potential impacts on our city if we do not significantly reduce global emissions.

WCC declared an ecological and climate emergency in June 2019 placing climate change front and centre of our decision-making. We supported our declaration with the release of an action plan. *Te Atakura, First to Zero* maps out a pathway to achieving net zero for our capital city by 2050. The plan recognises the need to support our vulnerable and lower income residents through this transition as well as taking opportunities to provide co-benefits for the environment, our communities, and the local economy. Affordable housing, equitable transitions, and giving effect to Te Tiriti are all important objectives for us, and we were pleased to see these reflected in the draft advice.

Te Atakura is an ambitious plan aimed at meeting the expectations of our community that we would step up to the climate challenge. We are determined to play our role in the significant transformation that will be required to keep global warming below 1.5°C. At 2°C or 3°C, in all likelihood, we will lose the heart of our city to the sea. Therefore, it is critical that Aotearoa contributes its share to achieving 1.5°C and demonstrates the kind of leadership that will help to inspire global action.

Wellington's pathway to net zero by 2050, as set out in *Te Atakura*, requires steep reductions in emissions by 2030. The city already has many of the building blocks in place with a compact urban form, investments in public transport and thriving urban biodiversity. Wellingtonian's are also up to the challenge and ready to apply the same creative, innovative, and resilient traits that have helped create one of the world's most liveable cities. We have plans underway proposing to:

- Maintain our compact form whilst growing our population (through our 'Planning for Growth' adoption of a spatial plan and District Plan review processes)
- Significantly invest in new active and public transport through Let's Get Wellington Moving, and
- Through *Te Atakura* we are already using our strong local community and business relationships to take climate action locally, across transport, building energy, waste, and our food supply.

There are however many areas of our emissions profile that we have little influence over and that is where we require central government to act, as without central government action and partnership we will be unable to meet our city target. Our submission focuses on transport and urban form as that reflects our city footprint, which is ~50% transport and 36% stationary energy (primarily in buildings), with only small contributions from waste, industry, and agriculture.

Our ask is that the Climate Change Commission uses its advice to central government to put in place the supporting and enabling actions we need at a local level. The Climate Change Commission with its ability to make wide ranging recommendations to government provides a once in a lifetime opportunity to set the platform for change.

Our comments on the draft report reflect WCC's desire for the level of ambition and urgency on reducing emissions to align with the scale of the climate emergency. **We are of the view the Commission should be advocating for a truly transformative approach over the next 15 years.** This should recognise the need to transform the systems that govern our lives but must also draw on what we learnt during our response to COVID-19 – that our team of five million are capable of a major shift in the way we live, work and play.

To create this shift, the Commission's final advice to government must address the following:

1. **Be more ambitious in setting budgets** – the budgets need to reflect what is necessary rather than what is achievable. This will encourage innovation and ensure we are doing our fair share to put the world on a path to a 1.5°C target.
2. **Increase the speed and scale of the transport recommendations** - greater mode shift in urban areas can be achieved in relatively short timeframes with central government support, which would enable bigger emissions cuts and deliver a range of co-benefits.
3. **Prioritise the role of behaviour change** - the team of five million has proven that we are capable of responding to a challenge where the need for action and the action required are both clearly communicated. Shifting behaviour will be an essential compliment to technological changes if we are to meet net zero by 2050.
4. **Be clear that a significant increase in funding and support is required** – and that this is an investment well worth making.
5. **Recognise the significance of local governments' contribution and role** – local government has a significant role in promoting and enabling climate action and is a critical implementation partner for achieving central and local government targets. However local government's funding tools are limited.

Finally, it is critical that the Climate Change Commission makes the most of its independent role from Government and provides evidence-based advice that reflects the level of aspiration needed to meet our national and global targets. **We would encourage you to speak freely, to outline a bold vision for New Zealand's future, and to not hold back.** Your advice should not take into account any perceived limit to political will, as it is a lack of political will that has stalled progress thus far. If we settle for what's probable and achievable, we may well fail to reach our target. And even worse, we may fail to respond to the climate emergency as the emergency it is.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss our comments directly with the Commission.

Yours sincerely



Andy Foster
Mayor of Wellington