

Zero Carbon Bill Submission

To the **Ministry for the
Environment**

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We would like to appear in person to support our
submission

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Te Rūnanga Taiohi o te Kaunihera o Pōneke

Introduction

1. The Wellington City Youth Council (Youth Council) welcomes the opportunity to submit on the Zero Carbon Bill (Bill).

2050 target

What process should the Government use to set a new emissions reduction target in legislation?

2. Youth Council believes the Government should set a target for 2050 in legislation as soon as possible. This shows New Zealanders and international communities that climate change is a priority, setting an example. By setting targets Aotearoa can begin a fair transition now, vital for this time sensitive issue, and meeting our COP21 obligations. By setting a strong target this also ensures all future governments will adhere to these goals which are vital for our future prosperity.

If the Government sets a 2050 target now, which is the best target for New Zealand?

3. Youth Council as a whole supports the most ambitious 2050 target: reducing all gases to net zero. However, it is critical to recognise the scientific difference between long-lived and short-lived gases. If need be, this may entail setting goals to achieve negative long-lived gases and stabilised short-lived gases.
4. Youth Council recognises that short-lived gases present the most difficult challenge to New Zealand with its unique economic setting, but this should not stand in the way of mitigating the threat of climate change. Our primary industries must develop more sustainable practices, not least because climate change stands to make the agricultural industry increasingly volatile in the face of extreme weather patterns and rising coasts.
5. Reducing our short-lived gases, which predominantly result from agriculture, makes both scientific sense and business sense.

How should New Zealand meet its targets?

6. We do not support the use of overseas carbon units to reach this goal as we believe that our Emissions Trading Scheme has historically been used to escape creating meaningful environmental change. Rather than shifting the responsibility of climate change mitigation into the hands of far-off countries, we must be world-leaders in reducing our own greenhouse gas emissions.

Should the Zero Carbon Bill allow the 2050 target to be revised if circumstances change?

7. We strongly believe that the 2050 target should remain strong even with “economic changes”. Climate change needs to be a priority for Aotearoa and weakening our targets will set a poor example locally and abroad.
8. Youth Council does believe that we should be able to alter the targets in response to major changes in scientific understanding or international agreements, though this should only be done with the best interests of climate progress in mind.

Emissions budgets

The Government proposes that three emissions budgets of five years each (i.e., covering the next 15 years) be in place at any given time. Do you agree with this proposal?

9. Youth Council supports having three budgets covering the next 15 years (in five-year instalments). This will allow for a clearer overview of action that needs to be taken during the three periods (Y1-5, Y6-10, and Y11-15).
10. Having budgets over three five-year horizons will provide New Zealanders with a forward-looking projection to which we as a country can work towards achieving.

Should the Government be able to alter the last emissions budget (ie, furthest into the future)?

11. Yes, the third emissions budget should be able to be changed, but only when the subsequent budget is set

Should the Government have the ability to review and adjust the second emissions budget within a specific range under (exceptional circumstances)?

12. Youth Council are generally hesitant to review and adjust the second emissions budget. Only under the most exceptional of circumstances should this course of action be considered, and generally only where there is a significant change in the technology or scientific methods surround climate change, to allow for updated best practice.

Do you agree with the considerations we propose that the Government and the Climate Change Commission take into account when advising on and setting budgets?

13. Youth Council believes the Government and Climate Commission should consider new scientific knowledge, technological innovations and social impacts when advising on and setting budgets. While it is important to consider the competitiveness of certain sectors of the economy, it is also vital Aotearoa transitions all sectors into a sustainable economy fairly, quickly and smoothly.
14. Beyond this, although economic impacts should be thoroughly considered, climate change must be made a priority, meaning fiscal circumstances cannot be used as an excuse for not taking long-term action.

Government response

Should the Zero Carbon Bill require Government to set out plans with a certain timeframe to achieve the emissions budget?

15. Ensuring that the Government sets out plans with a certain time frame is an easy way for the public to be made aware of the time this project will take. It is

vital that the public can understand and follow the process of this proposed Bill. To achieve the stated emissions budget, a timeframe will allow a more structured and developed plan.

16. The Zero Carbon Bill does require structure to ensure that this transition runs smoothly. If the Zero Carbon Bill does not have any timeframe, it will slowly erode the urgency of the issue of climate change. This may then cause Government to ignore or procrastinate on this key issue.

What are the most important issues for the Government to consider in setting plans to meet the budget? For example, who do we need to work with, what else needs to be considered?

17. To ensure that the budget and plans are met, consultation with local councils, business sectors and Iwi will need to take place. Hearing from these diverse groups of people will allow a broad understanding of the different viewpoints on this important proposed plan.
18. The plans for the budget must also be reasonable, and the target needs to be rational and appropriate. Wellingtonians also need to be kept up to date with latest changes and the ways in which people may be affected by the implementation of the Zero Carbon Bill.

Climate Change Commission

The Government has proposed that the Climate Change Commission advises on and monitors New Zealand's progress towards its goals. Do you agree with these functions?

19. Yes. The public votes for our Government, which means that decisions which affect the future of New Zealand should be placed in the hands of our elected Members of Parliament.

20. The role of the Climate Change Commission should be to offer advice on what the Government's goals should be, and to act as a watchdog over how this advice is turned into policy.
21. However, it is crucial that the Government makes a genuine commitment to its relationship with the Climate Change Commission. The elevated level of expertise of its appointed members, and the ability of members to offer non-partisan advice, will be invaluable assets in informing the Government's greenhouse gas goals.
22. Climate change transcends political aspirations and it is the responsibility of the Government of the day to act on the recommendations of the Climate Change Commission.

What role do you think the Climate Change Commission should have in relation to the New Zealand Emissions Trading Scheme (NZ ETS)?

23. The Climate Change Commission should provide advice on the policies that guide the Emissions Trading Scheme, but it would be inappropriate for the Commission to play a decision-making role.

The Government has proposed that Climate Change Commissioners need to have a range of essential and desirable expertise. Do you agree with the proposed expertise?

24. Yes. In particular, it is crucial that the Commission represents Māori interests. In the past, legislation has been used as a tool to marginalise Māori communities and undermine the promises of Te Tiriti o Waitangi - an exemplary case being the Foreshore and Seabed Act. If the Zero Carbon Bill is to ensure our transition towards a fair and just Aotearoa, then our responsibility to protect our indigenous heritage must be deeply embedded in the process.
25. Similarly, expertise in social inequity is critically required on the Commission. We must ensure that underprivileged communities are not disproportionately affected by our country's shift towards a sustainable economy.

26. Youth Council particularly supports the representation of expertise in local government affairs. We have seen first-hand how local councils shapes the day-to-day lives of New Zealanders, and we believe that climate change mitigation efforts begin at a local level.

Adapting to the impacts of climate change

Do you think the Zero Carbon Bill should cover adapting to climate change?

27. Youth Council believes that New Zealand alone taking action against climate change isn't enough to change the entire world. As we create plans for the future, adapting to the effect that climate change will have on Aotearoa should have a lot of emphasis towards it.

The Government has proposed a number of new functions to help us adapt to climate change. Do you agree with the proposed functions?

28. We agree that functions to adapt to climate change are important for the future of this Bill. Transparency and accurate information on the future of climate change and now it is currently affecting us is a key step to take.
29. However, Youth Council was confused as to what exactly these functions were, and would encourage them to be clarified for better understanding.

Should we explore setting up a targeted adaptation reporting power that could see some organisations share information on their exposure to climate change risks?

30. Yes. It would be beneficial to aid organisations in sharing their knowledge on climate change risks.