

16 July 2019

Committee Secretariat
Environment Committee
Parliament Buildings
Wellington

Re: Climate Change Response (Zero Carbon) Amendment Bill

Tēna koe

Regional Public Health would like to formally register our support for the Climate Change Response (Zero Carbon) Amendment Bill.

Regional Public Health (RPH) is the public health unit for the greater Wellington region. We work with communities to make the region a healthier and safer places to live. We promote good health, prevent diseases, and improve the quality of life for our population, with a particular focus on children, Māori, Pacific and low income households.

We are happy to provide further advice or clarification on any of the points raised in our written submission. The contact point for this submission is:

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Naku noa, na

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RPH's reasons for submitting

Climate change presents a serious and imminent threat to population health. New Zealanders are at risk of both the direct health effects of climate change (e.g. extreme weather events, injuries, heat waves and damage to infrastructure) and indirect health effects (e.g. changes in ecosystems and subsequent disease patterns, microbiological contamination of water, conflict over resource scarcity, poor mental health, food insecurity, destruction of infrastructure, homes, and livelihoods)^{1,2}. Climate change is also exacerbating inequities in Aotearoa, with Māori, Pacific and low-income communities at greater risk of experiencing adverse health and social outcomes.

Climate action presents one of the greatest opportunities to positively impact the environment and to improve the health and wellbeing of New Zealanders. For example, actions to increase active transportation, improve housing conditions, encourage changes to food consumption, and reduce air pollution will not only lower greenhouse gas emissions, they will also have positive health co-benefits, including a reduction in the burden of cancers, cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, and respiratory diseases^{3,4}.

By committing to climate action with an explicit focus on equity, the government has the potential to make significant improvements to the health, social, and economic wellbeing of all New Zealanders, and particularly improve outcomes for Māori and Pacific populations, low-income households, and people living with disabilities.

RPH's Recommendations

RPH **commends** the Government on taking positive steps to limit the global average temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, and to set up the Climate Change Commission as an independent advisory body. RPH also **commends** the bill for inclusion of a national climate change risk assessment, a national adaptation plan, regular progress reporting on the implementation of the national adaptation plan, and an adaptation information-gathering power.

RPH would like to make the following recommendations:

1. Clarify the purpose and principles of the bill

- Explicitly state that the purpose of the Climate Change Response (Zero Carbon) Amendment Bill is to reduce emissions;

¹ Royal Society (2017). Human Health Impacts of Climate Change for New Zealand: Evidence Summary. <https://royalsociety.org.nz/assets/documents/Report-Human-Health-Impacts-of-Climate-Change-for-New-Zealand-Oct-2017.pdf>

² Watts, N., et al (2018). "The Lancet Countdown on health and climate change: shaping the health of nations for centuries to come." *The Lancet* 391.10120 (2018): 581-630.

³ Watts, N., et al. (2015). "Health and climate change: policy responses to protect public health." *The Lancet* **386**(10006): 1861-1914

⁴ Bennett, H., et al. (2014). "Health and equity impacts of climate change in Aotearoa-New Zealand, and health gains from climate action." *New Zealand Medical Journal* **3**: 12-16

- Include health, wellbeing and health equity in the purpose statement of the bill

2. Incorporate Te Tiriti o Waitangi more fully into the bill and include Māori leadership and Māori solutions

- Ensure that Te Tiriti o Waitangi principles are foundational in the Explanatory note and operationalised throughout the bill (e.g. 5ZD, 5Z);
- Mandate the permanent inclusion of Māori representation on the Climate Change Commission with expertise in hauora Māori, health equity and decolonisation: 5H

The bill should reflect a strong commitment to the Te Tiriti o Waitangi principles, including full recognition of Māori leadership and Mātauranga Māori in the development of climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies. It is imperative that the Government build meaningful and sustained partnerships with Māori throughout the development and implementation of the bill.

3. Recognize that the health and wellbeing of people are inextricably linked with climate change

- Include health, wellbeing and health equity as part of the various functions, duties and powers of the Climate Change Commission and Minister, and include requirements to complete assessments and plans: 5H(1)(d)(i); 5L(d); 5ZD(3); 5ZM(1)(a); 5ZQ(4);
- Ensure that health, wellbeing and health equity are fully recognised and accounted for in regards to the benefits, costs and risks associated with mitigation and adaptation efforts within the bill by clarifying the definitions of “impacts” and “distributional effects”: S4 (Interpretation);
- Mandate the inclusion of commissioner(s) with expertise in health, health equity and climate change 5H(1)(d)(i)

4. Strengthen emission targets

- Align the emissions targets with the IPCC 1.5 degrees report⁵;
- Set an earlier net zero target of 2040 for all gases other than biogenic methane;
- Separate the targets for long- and short-lived gases;
- Set stronger biogenic methane reduction targets to ensure early and concerted climate action:
 - 24-48% by 2030 (relative to 2010), and
 - 33-69% by 2050 (relative to 2010)

Alongside this, RPH recommends that the use of international credits be prohibited entirely to ensure long-term certainty and accountability. Instead, a focus on Aotearoa will drive domestic action and innovation from local communities and businesses ensuring direct benefits.

⁵ <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/>

5. Make the bill enforceable

- Establish the duties and roles of companies and industries in the private sector, particularly those which contribute significantly to emissions: 5ZV;
- Set clear roles and responsibilities for relevant Ministers and government agencies, in addition to those of the Climate Change Commission;
- Require government Ministers and public leaders to consider emissions budgets in the execution of their duties;
- Allow for decision-making by government Ministers and public leaders, as well as emissions reductions targets, to be subject to judicial review: 5ZJ; 5ZK

It is important that the bill set clear duties and legally-binding emission targets, with oversight provided by the Climate Commission, to ensure that the government and private sector are held accountable if targets are not met. Strengthening the enforceability of the bill will promote urgent and sustained action by current and consecutive governments.

6. Commit to a just transition

- Include the wording “support a just transition to a low carbon economy - one that is fair, equitable and inclusive” as part of the purpose of the bill

Action on climate change must be carefully considered to avoid increasing inequities and to support a just transition to a low carbon economy for all New Zealanders. This is in line with obligations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Particular consideration must be given to the impacts of climate change policy decisions on vulnerable groups. This means developing plans and solutions together with impacted groups, such as disabled people and workers in industry where job losses will occur, to mitigate consequences and maximize the opportunities of a transition to a low carbon economy. Implementing a just transition to a low carbon economy presents a significant opportunity to foster an environmentally and socially sustainable economy driving job creation, job upgrading, social justice and poverty eradication.⁶

⁶ International Labour Organization (2015). “Guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all”. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---emp_ent/documents/publication/wcms_432859.pdf