

Submission in person (9-sept 2019)

I have been actively engaged in climate science for the past 16 years, and currently lead a project within the Climate programme of the CRI I work for. I interact with NZ's leading climate scientists on a daily basis, and I'm also a mum to three young children. Typically, I'm fairly reserved and wouldn't naturally find myself in an arena like this. However, my deep concern for the future, motivated by my level of engagement and understanding of this issue, has brought me here today.

To put it right up front, the purpose of this bill is to fulfil NZ's obligations, not to itself, but as a global citizen. Cutting our own emissions is not going to change how quickly South Dunedin is inundated, nor halt the retreat of our iconic glaciers. It's not going to solve the water crisis in Canterbury, and it's not going to change when and how our food crops have to change.

As a country, we are at the mercy of the world's emissions – not just from today, but the legacy emissions from the past several decades whose impacts are still working their way through the climate system.

Nonetheless, we have an opportunity here to make a difference. Although physically small on the world stage, our role could be to lead the world to change. Arguably, New Zealand is best placed, among all countries, to make wholesale changes, because we can do so for a lifestyle cost that is relatively light. We therefore have a global responsibility here. The world needs to see us act with courage here. To not do so would be negligent.

And the sooner we do so, the better the overall outcome. Think of a runaway truck careering down the road. There is certainly going to be damage in the near term that can't be averted whatever we do. BUT, it's not hard to see that the sooner and harder the brakes are put on, the less that damage will ultimately be.

I know that there is a lot of confusion and misunderstanding out there. A lot of it is due to genuine ignorance or disengagement from the issue. However, there's also a lot of deliberately misleading or false information being put out to delay action. I ask you to cut through this and align with the science. The real, basic facts are not hard to find – in fact the fundamentals were identified over a century ago.

And the science is compelling. There is now evidence of anthropogenic fingerprints in the accelerated melt of Antarctica. We've seen droughts and food shortages become more intense, and we're now even able to attribute individual storm events to the cumulative effect of human activity.

This is a global issue which requires urgent global solutions. We cannot simply act in our own interests here, although the political incentive may make that an attractive proposition.

It therefore requires an intelligence and determination that transcends political boundaries and lifetimes. For better or worse, you are the individuals to whom this responsibility has fallen on behalf of all New Zealanders.

As one concerned kiwi to another, I therefore urge you to swifter and more decisive action than is currently being planned. New Zealand is in a fortunate position here. For us, to do more would come at minimal cost, especially compared to the time to adapt and other lifestyle benefits we stand to gain. This is an issue that not only defines our current generation, but one whose ramifications will ripple out for many generations into the future.