

Submission to the Environment Select Committee

Climate Change Response (Zero Carbon) Amendment Bill

16 July 2019

1. The Canterbury Mayoral Forum thanks the Environment Select Committee for the opportunity to submit on the Climate Change Response (Zero Carbon) Amendment Bill.
2. Representatives of the Forum wish to appear before the Committee to speak to our submission, preferably by teleconference.

Background and context

3. The Canterbury Mayoral Forum comprises the Mayors of the ten territorial local authorities in Canterbury and the Chair of the Canterbury Regional Council (Environment Canterbury), supported by our Chief Executives. The purpose of the Forum is to promote collaboration across the region and increase the effectiveness of local government in meeting the needs of Canterbury's communities.
4. All Canterbury councils actively participate in the Forum: the Kaikōura, Hurunui, Waimakariri, Selwyn, Ashburton, Timaru, Mackenzie, Waimate and Waitaki District Councils, the Christchurch City Council and Environment Canterbury.
5. During the current local government term, Canterbury councils have recognised the growing importance of climate change and the potential impacts on our communities. To help coordinate action and improve capability across our councils, the Canterbury Mayoral Forum established a Climate Change Working Group in May 2017 (consisting of council staff), and more recently a Climate Change Steering Group in February 2019 (consisting of Mayors and Chief Executives).
6. The role of the Climate Change Working Group is to provide technical advice, share knowledge and best practice and engage with other relevant agencies on climate change issues. The Climate Change Steering Group furthers this work by providing leadership, political oversight and direction for the region on climate change.
7. The Forum notes that both Local Government New Zealand and the Society of Local Government Managers have submitted on the Bill. The Forum affirms those submissions made on behalf of the local government sector.

Mayors standing together for Canterbury.

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Comments on the Bill

8. All member councils of the Canterbury Mayoral Forum support the general framework of the Climate Change Response (Zero Carbon) Amendment Bill.
9. Individual councils do have differing views on how some of the detail of the Bill should be enacted. We note that Hurunui District has exercised its right not to support the Canterbury Mayoral Forum's submission. The views of Hurunui District are covered in its individual submission on the Bill.
10. Christchurch City Council, the Ashburton, Timaru, Waimakariri and Waimate District Councils and Environment Canterbury also intend to make individual submissions. This submission is intended to be complementary of the individual submissions from our member councils and does not diminish our support as a region for the Bill.

2050 target

11. The Mayoral Forum supports the introduction of specific percentage emissions reduction targets as outlined in the Bill and an approach to reducing emissions that is ambitious, enduring and transparent. The appropriateness of specific percentage targets sits outside our areas of expertise, but we note that the specific targets are consistent with those of the IPCC. This approach is welcome as it is science-informed, increases long-term policy certainty and will incentivise investment in low-emissions technologies.
12. There is no reason why New Zealand should not meet this target by not only reducing domestic emissions but also by using some emissions reductions from overseas through international carbon units, provided these international units have strong environmental safeguards.

Emissions budgets

13. The Mayoral Forum supports setting the first three emissions budgets in 2020 as five-year budgets, in order to provide certainty to 2035. We consider that once set, these budgets should not be amended except to revise them downwards (but not upwards) in the event that monitoring forecast reductions indicates a failure to meet the long-term goal of zero carbon by 2050.

Climate Change Commission

14. The Mayoral Forum supports:
 - the proposal to establish a Climate Change Commission as an independent Crown Entity
 - the Commission's proposed advisory, risk assessment and progress monitoring roles
 - the proposed method of appointing members of the Commission.

Adapting to the impacts of climate change

15. The Mayoral Forum supports the Bill's requirements for a National Climate Change Risk Assessment (NCCRA) every six years and a National Adaptation Plan every three years. Establishing and developing an NCCRA and National Adaptation framework provides opportunities for a more co-ordinated and consistent cross-sector approach to risk assessment and adaptation, if the frameworks are developed in a way that supports this approach.

16. Including information from regional council and territorial authority assessments of climate change risks will help ensure a coherent, consistent and coordinated approach to risk assessment. Effective NCCRA development will require ongoing input and contribution from local government.
17. The Bill is unclear how local government information will be used and presented, and how it will inform and align with other risk assessments. We note there is currently no requirement to consult on the NCCRA in the Bill. There needs to be consultation with local government to enable effective NCCRA development. This is especially important in the first couple of iterations of the NCCRA as the relationship between national risk assessments, local government and other sector risk assessments are worked through.
18. The Bill should be more specific about the role and importance of engaging and consulting with local government to ensure the Government and Commission work closely with local government in developing NCCRAs. Closer working and a fuller consideration of risk assessments will enable a coordinated and consistent approach between central and regional/local government and reduce the risk of duplication.
19. The development of a National Adaptation Plan will be very helpful for local government in planning for and dealing with natural hazard risks that arise from climate change, provided this is developed through strong ongoing engagement and collaboration between central, regional and local government. The national adaptation plan framework provides an opportunity for improved clarity about roles and responsibilities between central, regional and local government.
20. If the national adaptation plan is to be successful, it will also need to clearly identify how adaptation actions are to be funded. While we appreciate this detail doesn't sit within the Bill, we do have concerns that increased responsibilities and expectations will be placed on local government without the appropriate funding mechanisms. This issue has been canvassed significantly in recent reports (e.g. the Productivity Commission's inquiry into local government funding and financing).

Conclusion

21. In general, the Mayoral Forum supports the Bill recognising that it is at a high level and sets the framework for developing policies from an adaptation and emissions reduction perspective. Given the critical role local government has in adaptation, we request that the Bill reflect the importance of central and local government working together.
22. Thank you for the opportunity to submit on the Climate Change Response (Zero Carbon) Amendment Bill.



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Chair, Canterbury Mayoral Forum



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