

Submission to:

New Zealand Productivity Commission (2018) Low-emissions economy draft report.

Congratulations to the writers and workers who prepared the 2018 Low-emissions draft report, it represents a major step forward in defining New Zealand's position on future emission reductions. It is precise and factual. It was heartening to read that achieving net zero emissions by 2050 is a genuine possibility.

However there have been previous commitments to emission reductions by the New Zealand Government, to reduce emissions to 1990 levels by 2020 or even 20% below 1990 levels that in the end turned out to be emission increases. The picture is confusing but plus 54% between 1990 and 2014 according to Stats NZ and Wikipedia graphs show a net increase of 117% between 1990 and 2012. I am not sure who to believe but clearly there has been no reduction to date.

The terms of reference for the Commission require it to 'identify options for how New Zealand could reduce its domestic greenhouse gas emissions' . . . 'while at the same time continuing to grow incomes and wellbeing'. I interpret that to mean 'the Commission can suggest anything so long as it does not interfere with our life style or its steady growth and improvement' But is that in reality what we should be aiming for?

In the bigger picture the objective should clearly be how do we transition from a growth based market economy to a sustainable economy. Emissions are merely the result of the main driving variables, that is production and consumption on the one hand and population on the other. We live on a finite planet and as even school children know exponential growth in a finite space is not a viable option. Yet it appears we continue to aim essentially for business as usual, that is exponential growth, with a few tweaks. So my submission to the Draft Report is 'should the ground rules of the enquiry be changed so that it addresses a change to a 'sustainable' way of life rather than addressing business as usual with a nod (OK a big nod) towards reduced emissions.?' To me it seems odd to address the symptoms without addressing the causes.

It is easy to argue that New Zealand's economy and population are so small, relative to the world in total, that it is pointless to address issues of economy and population. After all world population is increasing at over eighty million a year, twenty New Zealand's each and every year. But the draft proposal clearly states

with regard to emissions that it is not just about absolute size, it is about perceptions and doing ones bit in the world.

Thank you for reading my submission.

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