

# Plea from 50 specialists to politicians to put climate first

Those campaigning this election are being urged to listen to the scientific consensus on climate change.

This election should be a turning point for scaling up the work on the climate.

More than 50 climate specialists and business and community leaders have written an open letter calling on political candidates to make this year's election a 'climate election'.

While climate change policies have been announced through the campaign, the issue has been overshadowed by political arguments about government finances, tax, crime, and co-governance.

The letter from a range of people with concerns about climate change was made public at today's Environmental Defence Society and Sustainable Business Council's climate change and business conference in Auckland.

Among the signatories are PureAdvantage executive director Simon Millar, Fenwick chief executive Izzy Fenwick, CarbonCrop co-founder Nick Butcher, Tahī chief executive Suzan Craig, and co-founder of Chia Sisters Chloe Van Dyke. A number of climate scientists and environmentalists have also signed.

In their letter, they said the country was running out of time to cut emissions and transition to a low-carbon resilient economy.

"We need politicians who will listen to scientific consensus and realise the economic incentives in prioritising climate resilience and mitigation. Politicians can use Election 2023 as a turning point to scale the transformational climate work that leading businesses, tangata whenua, and communities are already taking," the letter said.

It called for cross-party support for climate policy and action, just as the political parties – Act excepted – had done when passing the Zero Carbon Act.



*Politicians are being urged to take cross-party approach to climate change.*

## **No short-term politicking**

"This means an election that ensures long-term thinking, not short-term politicking. This means an election that demonstrates policies which will achieve a thriving, sustainable, and equitable economy that priorities people and the planet. Let us continue to demonstrate bipartisanship on climate policy and action, prioritising an equitable and just transition to a resilient, net-zero economy," the letter said.

It noted a range of policies could be pursued to reduce emissions. They included removing any incentives for coal, oil, and gas, such as subsidies and ensuring no new oil and gas permits were issued and that the political parties continued to act on the 2030 target of 100% renewable electricity.

But the Act Party, for instance, has vowed to reverse the ban on oil and gas exploration and National opposes the 2030 100% renewable electricity target. In its policy, National said that would raise electricity prices and make it more difficult to achieve the country's emissions targets. It would, however, electrify the system by slashing red tape to make it easier for renewable energy projects to be built.

Act would also make it easier for offshore wind farms to be consented and introduce a regulatory framework to support carbon capture.

The open letter to politicians also calls for improvements to public transport, the revival of inter-city passenger rail, the extension of the clean car discount to bikes and ramp up investment for walking and cycling tracks.

On agriculture it wants the next government to hold firm on the deadline of imposing a levy on farm emissions in 2025 and to ratchet that up by 2030 under the primary sector partnership He Waka Eke Noa. Act opposes the idea altogether, while National would extend the deadline for farmers out to 2030.

Fenwick said the current lack of leadership and robust climate policies coming from Labour and National was not only negligent to the safety of New Zealanders, but also to the country's ability to be taken seriously on the global stage.

"If we keep acting like climate change is not a priority, nations will stop trading with us, investors will stop investing in us, tourists will stop visiting us, and our youth will leave us. Any leader lacking the foresight to see this should not be running the country," she said.

#### Take climate out of politics



*The letter urged no relaxation of 2025 deadline for pricing on-farm emissions.*

Millar is equally adamant more needs to be done.

"Politicians have to grasp the fact that the sustainability and success of our economy and communities are completely intertwined with enduring climate resilience and thriving ecosystems, so let's take climate out of politics and unlock this massive opportunity at pace and scale," Millar said.

The letter comes a little more than a day after Labour said National's plan to cut policies that reduced emissions would leave a huge gap in the country's emissions budgets and could result in Kiwis paying far more than they already did for petrol.

Labour's climate change spokesperson Megan Woods said National would cut every initiative to reduce emissions in order to fund its tax cuts.

"Ending the clean car discount will set us back nearly three million tonnes and stopping support to remove coal boilers from factories would likely see more than three million tonnes more," Woods said.

But both National and Act have said they would rely much more directly on the Emissions trading scheme to drive down emissions, rather than use government subsidies for clean cars and for large corporates to reduce their emissions.

Woods said official advice to the Government indicated relying on the ETS alone would be the most expensive way to reduce emissions.

"Large emitters have told us the carbon price would need to go to \$200 a tonne, which would equate to the cost of petrol rising by around 40 cents a litre in order to replace the amount of emissions we are saving from deals to decarbonise industry," she said.

The open letter to politicians does not specifically address the issue of the ETS or of industrial emissions, apart from saying policies and regulations should be aligned to support businesses and financial institutions to adopt net zero targets, issue transition plans and disclose progress in order to halve emissions by 2030.

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