

Dear all —

It's been a year since we published an open letter to NZ Rugby about its decision to scrum down with UK petro-chemical giant INEOS. Thanks for your support as signatories. It was covered in [Stuff, the Herald](#) and dominated talkback for a few days, with many signatories taking interviews, including [former All Black Bob Burgess](#), climate scientist [Dave Frame](#), [Sir Bob Harvey](#) (from 10:00) and [me](#). At the time we [pointed out](#) the new deal:

- Misses an opportunity to show leadership on the global stage; that is, to lead from the front on the defining issue of our time.
- Undermines NZ's legal obligation of net zero CO2 emissions by 2050 and further diminishes the world's chance of containing global average temperature at the guardrail of 1.5°C or thereabouts.
- High tackles our Pacific neighbours, responsible for just 0.03% of global emissions but already being hit with the worst effects of climate change. As things deteriorate, they will suffer even worse king tides, more intense and frequent cyclones, and the eventual loss of low-lying islands due to sea-level rise.
- Fails to convert for women, youth and people with disabilities, all of whom have teams under NZ Rugby's umbrella. These groups are disproportionately affected by climate change.
- Blindsides New Zealand's clean, green image at a time when we need to be shoring up the defensive line. The French and Netherlands (the latter new to rugby), in a growing movement, have this year banned fossil fuel advertising; meanwhile, New Zealand's premier sports organisation is happy to introduce it.
- Runs in opposition to the key mantras that have set the All Blacks apart and made New Zealand Rugby teams the envy of the world. For example, this partnership does not display 'leadership', 'humility' or 'playing for a higher purpose'.
- Carries with it significant reputational risk for the All Blacks and Aotearoa New Zealand.

The response

To its credit, NZ Rugby initially engaged with our letter. It [publicly responded](#) and agreed to meet with me as 'Kiwis in Climate convenor' in London. At that meeting NZ Rugby's CEO Mark Robinson said it was producing a 'strategic roadmap' on decarbonisation. An early departure from the INEOS agreement was not a consideration. He agreed NZ Rugby would:

- Introduce me to the consultancy it was working with in order to provide early feedback.
- Provide Kiwis in Climate New Zealand members with an "opportunity to engage again after the work is complete in NZ to share the start of our journey"
- Continue open dialogue with Mark, including a suggestion of "maybe also the opportunity to bring a group together in the UK during the end of year tour"
- Think about a high-impact climate-leadership opportunity like "flipping" the Ford fleet from internal combustion to all electric.

Unfortunately, none of the above has materialised — recent outreach has resulted in KiC being effectively brushed off and we see no evidence of a strategic roadmap under development. We plan to send a letter to NZ Rugby asking what the status of this effort is.

The time is ripe one year on

- When Australia's richest woman, Gina Rinehart threw a financial lifeline to Netball Australia, she triggered a [debate about sponsorships and the role of social and political issues](#) in the sporting arena.
- Last week, [high-profile fans of the AFL's Fremantle Dockers](#) urged management to sever ties with long-term sponsor, fossil fuel company Woodside, over its carbon emissions.
- Meanwhile, Australian test cricket captain [Pat Cummins reportedly raised issues](#) with Cricket Australia's deal with Alinta Energy, for the same reasons.
- And in a move that clearly articulated aligned brand and pan-national values, in March [Moana Pasifika signed EarthX](#) as principal sponsor.

Last week the [Net Zero Tracker](#), a global accountability initiative that I run, produced a [report on the 100 largest private companies](#) (which included INEOS) and compared these companies with the 100 largest publicly-traded firms. The results were stark:

- Less than half as many have set net zero targets (32 of the top 100 private firms compared with 69 of the top 100 publicly-listed companies).
- Of those that have set a net zero target, only 13% (4) have published a plan to reach it, versus 73% (50) of their publicly-listed counterparts.
- The private companies that have set a net zero target are less likely to include Scope 3 emissions within it, are less likely to have set interim targets, and give less clarity on their planned use of offsets.

Globally, private firms are largely unaccountable and unaccounted for. When a publicly-listed company sets (or doesn't set) a net zero target, they incur a degree of external accountability — from their investors, customers and civil society. In comparison, privately-held firms, like INEOS, inhabit shadier surroundings and can escape scrutiny.

Next steps

1. We will write to NZ Rugby to ask if anything has been taken forward and ask why it has not already been published.
2. If we receive a disappointing reply or no reply at all, we will attempt to raise this issue in the public domain again — there may be no going back on INEOS, but what we can help do is prevent this from happening again.

Before we decide how to take this forward, **we'd like to invite all our original signatories the opportunity to offer suggestions.** Please reply to this email with your thoughts.

Ngā mihi

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Analysis: [Net Zero Stocktake 2022](#) | [Everybody's Business: The net zero blind spot](#)

Explainers: [Science of climate change](#) | [Stopping climate change](#) | [COP27: A visual guide](#) | [Climate Finance](#) | [Covid and Climate](#) | [Worlds Apart, IPCC](#)

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