



1 July 2025

Rt Hon Christopher Luxon
Prime Minister
Parliament Buildings
Wellington

Dear Prime Minister,

As professionals passionate about Aotearoa New Zealand's future prosperity and desirability, we are writing to urge you to respect and maintain the cross-parliamentary approach to our legislated 2050 climate change targets.

We further urge you to seek parliamentary agreement on strengthening these targets in the direction of the Climate Change Commission's advice. Stronger climate action will benefit Aotearoa New Zealand. We strongly oppose any weakening of the legislated targets.

Introduction to Kiwis in Climate

[Kiwis in Climate](#) ("KiC") is a global professional network of over 450 New Zealanders working in climate and sustainability. Our members include executive leaders and experts from a range of fields including business, non-profit, science, law, engineering, and policy, and are spread across the world from Auckland and Wellington to London and New York.

Our kaupapa is to share knowledge and insights that accelerate science-backed solutions for mitigating and adapting to climate change.

The diverse make-up of KiC and cross-pollination of ideas gives us a unique view of Aotearoa New Zealand's progress on climate change on the global stage as well as the opportunities and risks to Aotearoa New Zealand from collective global action (or inaction) on climate change. Collective views are informed by world leading practice by Kiwis who are on the ground developing the solutions. As we represent interests from a range of fields, our recommendations are balanced and considered; we want to see a world where communities, businesses and the economy thrive - within the natural limits of our only life-supporting planet.

The imperative of a cross-parliamentary approach

The Zero Carbon Act, which includes the current 2050 targets, passed Parliament unanimously in 2019 with no votes against. The goal of the Act was to depoliticise climate action and create more certainty for investors. It creates a framework to avoid the kind of major policy swings that have undermined low-carbon investment in other countries such as Australia or the United States: a framework where both sides of the House are guided by the independent expert Climate Change Commission.

The current legislated 2050 targets, a 24-47% reduction in biogenic methane and net-zero for other gases, were a compromise position across political parties. That compromise binds current opposition parties (who favoured stronger targets) as much as it binds those now in government.

If the government chooses to ignore that compromise and legislate to weaken the biogenic methane target, against the advice of the Commission and without cross-parliamentary agreement, then there is no reason to expect that opposition parties will feel bound by compromise either. A weakened target will only last as long as the current government, almost inevitably to be replaced by a stronger one - perhaps even stronger than the Climate Change Commission's recommendations. We note that key peer countries and trading partners (EU, UK, Australia, Canada, Japan) have net-zero targets that include all gases including methane, putting that possibility back on the table. Strengthened targets then risk being repealed in turn by a subsequent government. This would send us into the wild swings in climate policy that all parties were hoping to avoid in passing the Zero Carbon Act unanimously.

While we consider that the 2050 targets should be strengthened not weakened (as outlined below), if you are not willing to pursue strengthening at this time then at a minimum we urge you to leave the current targets in place to avoid undermining the cross-party consensus that underpins the Act and provides stability for long-term investment.

We understand that the government's preference is for a 24% methane reduction target. This is in the existing range, so would not require legislative amendment. The government's modelled scenario for the second emissions reduction plan achieves more than a 24% reduction.

Leaving the current target range in place will send the message to all political parties, the New Zealand public, and investors that a consensus approach informed by the Commission's recommendations still holds.

The 2050 targets should be strengthened

The 2050 targets sit in the Climate Change Response Act, whose purpose is for Aotearoa New Zealand to "contribute to the global effort under the Paris Agreement to limit the global average temperature to 1.5 celsius above pre-industrial levels". As the world is not currently on track to

achieve the 1.5C goal, weakening our contribution to help achieve that would appear inconsistent with the purpose of the Act.

However, holding the targets at their current level is not enough. We can do more, it is in our interest to do more, and it is our fair share of addressing the global climate challenge to do more.

The Climate Change Commission's advice makes a compelling case that our 2050 targets can and should be strengthened. They have recommended strengthening to a 35-47% range for biogenic methane, a net-negative 20Mt target for other gases, and to bring international aviation and shipping into the target. These recommendations followed from an analysis of changes in technology and trends since the current targets were legislated in 2019, which showed that more is now feasible at lower cost.

It is in Aotearoa New Zealand's interest to pursue strong climate action. Our clean, green brand underpins primary sector exports, but we need to walk the talk to maintain that brand and keep exports globally competitive as large customers demand increasing sustainability. As we see the rise of plant based and fermentation precision foods for bulk ingredients, New Zealand will need to position itself as the best quality, lowest footprint animal products, and maintain that position as others push to out-compete us. The valuable knowledge and technology developed by being an innovator rather than a slow-follower during this rapid transition make it financially beneficial to be a climate leader.

Global business sentiment remains resolute on climate action. The 2025 Business Barometer from the World Business Council for Sustainable Development shows that 91% of leaders say their businesses have maintained or increased their climate investments, not primarily because of mandates but because they see it as essential for long-term competitiveness. They recognise that the cost of inaction is higher than the cost of action. There is a strong call from business leaders for governments to stay committed to climate targets and policies not just for climate outcomes, but for economic stability and global competitiveness and resilience.

We also have a responsibility to act. Aotearoa New Zealand has higher per capita emissions than the global average so we need to reduce our emissions significantly to do our fair share. A fair share would mean taking responsibility for our historic warming and ensuring that we don't move the risks and costs to future generations from not taking the action required. The Commission's recommended revised targets would mean we contribute more fairly to action on limiting global warming and their recommendations take into account what is realistic and feasible for the economy and communities.

We urge you to seek cross-parliamentary agreement on strengthening targets in the direction of the Commission's advice, to better align our climate ambition with Aotearoa New Zealand's interests.

“No additional warming”

Holding Aotearoa New Zealand's warming at current levels is higher than a fair contribution to the 1.5C goal, given our position as a high historical emitter, high current emitter, and advanced economy. We have already overshoot our national fair share of global warming, and should be aiming to reduce warming, not maintain it. It is grossly inequitable for high-emitting countries to claim the right to continue their outsized share of warming at the expense of developing countries. This is at odds with our commitment to equity under the Paris Agreement.

The concept of a "no additional warming" target was a political choice, it is not a scientific one. Indeed, the government's independent panel was explicitly barred from considering whether this is an appropriate fair-share target. As Adrian Macey and David Frame state (Business Desk, 11 June) "This doesn't imply that no additional warming from methane is the appropriate target for Aotearoa [...] decisions about methane need to take into account a whole lot more factors, including domestic, international, and intergenerational dimensions." The Climate Change Commission's advice on 2050 targets undertook exactly that type of analysis, weighing the comprehensive set of factors set out in the Climate Change Response Act.

Our ask

With the climate crisis worsening, all countries including Aotearoa New Zealand should do as much as possible to reduce global warming. You are in government at a time where courageous and brave political leadership is needed. Decisions made today will impact for decades to centuries. Working to strengthen targets in the direction of the Climate Change Commission's advice will maintain a depoliticised approach to climate change action, and go a long way to helping all of us work more collaboratively to build the best future for Aotearoa New Zealand.

Yours,

Kiwis in Climate membership
www.kiwisinclimate.org