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Submission to the Ministry of Economic Development: Transitional Measures – Options to move towards low emissions electricity and stationary energy supply and to facilitate a transition to greenhouse gas pricing in the future

The National Council of Women of New Zealand (NCWNZ) is an umbrella organisation representing 42 Nationally Organised Societies. It has 32 Branches throughout the country attended by representatives of those societies and some 150 other societies as well as individual members. The Council's function is to serve women, the family and the community through research, study, discussion and action.

NCWNZ has policy dating back to 1990 expressing its concern regarding the increase in climate change. Many submissions on this and related subjects have been made over the years. This present submission continues that long history of interest which NCWNZ members have taken in conservation matters.

This submission is written by the Environment Standing Committee based on input from responses from 24 Branches and NCWNZ policy, and it has also been reviewed by a member of the NCWNZ Board. It deals with short term measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the energy sector.

Members responded to these questions from the discussion document.

A) Who should bear the costs – emitters, consumers or the Government (P. 49, (2))

The majority of branches considered that emitters should bear the costs, while admitting that these costs would mostly be handed down to consumers.

Some thought that all three should bear the costs, depending on Policy, since it would encourage each group to think more thriftily.

B) What impacts on energy prices are acceptable? (P. 47 (24))

The majority said there is no way that these prices are controllable, except by regulations, and that voluntary control had not worked in the past.

Some responders thought that the acceptance by the public would depend on the success of the promotion and information campaign.





One branch suggested we follow Australia's example and shut off major installations at night to see how much energy is saved. Many lights are not needed than.

One member said the discussion should not centre on money, but that the central concern should be how we reduce greenhouse emissions.

C) Is certainty of price impact or certainty of outcome more important (P. 50 (3))

The universal response was that certainty of outcome was most important.

With climate scientists reporting that there is a major underestimation of rate and extent of change, an urgent reduction of between 60 and 90% emissions is necessary. Top priority for all sectors, and all people, must be reduction of greenhouse gases.

D) Which of the alternative (Cap and trade, Baseline and Credit, Trading of cross-sectoral credits, or CO2 Charge) do you consider the best option? (P. 21 (1))

There is concern that the demand for carbon credits for post 1990 forests by farmers/forestry owners, when NZ is currently in deficit of at least \$120 million a year (as at present figures) is moving carbon as a commodity in the direction that NCWNZ does not support. If Carbon Credits can be bought and sold, the buyers will feel they can continue emitting gases without concern; sellers will feel they have already made their contribution and do not need to change any other behaviour.

One Branch thought Cap and Trade would be best, but that the suggested options should be studied by economists first. (There was no acknowledgement from these members that economic growth always leads to more energy use).

A few respondents thought that different option may be required for different sectors, but not until New Zealand is in credit under Kyoto.

General Comments:

All branches believed strongly that a first priority must be an information campaign, without which none of the measures suggested will be supported by a majority of the public. Sweden sent a package of detailed information on Climate Change to every house in the country, and is now one of the leaders on reduced emissions.

This could include promotion of positive examples, such as a business contribution to employees' costs for those who walk or cycle to work.

Most branches felt strongly that environmental impacts must have priority over economic impacts. However one branch thought that environment and economic impacts should be considered equally.

As a country New Zealand has the potential to lead in the area of measures that adapt to climate change and global warming. One member recalled that years ago there was an electricity crisis owing to lack of rain. New Zealanders were told to cut back on power, and the percentage reductions were published daily in the newspapers. This produced high levels of saving. New



Zealanders have shown that they can respond so willingly and so well; and this proven adaptation shows they can respond again once they are convinced of the reason.

One branch thought that petrol rationing to be a far better option than a charge on petrol vehicles, since a charge would impact most on lower income families.

Many members asked why there was no mention of self sufficiency.

Already there is a movement overseas against road and air miles. It is future local economies that are stressed by many climates writers.

Conclusion

NCWNZ is heartened that the Government announced its commitment to addressing the impacts and causes of climate change in New Zealand. The NCWNZ membership is likewise committed to playing an active role in finding solutions, hence the adoption of sustainable development as a target focus in September 2006.

NCWNZ encourages the Government to take leadership on this issue and to utilise all available expertise and resources to ensure that meaningful and effective targets are set within any action plan developed. It is critical that democratic processes, such as consultations or even the establishment of expert bodies, such as a taskforce, remain a feature of the solution-setting.

Should the Government undertake to launch an information campaign, NCWNZ recommends that all media forms be utilised, particularly those that reach a mass audience. Many members of the Council, not dissimilar from the Government, found "An Inconvenient Truth" particularly enlightening and widely accessible. This, coupled with the airing of other climate change documentaries, and other media input, such as interviews with politicians and scientists on radio and in written media, will help the public to establish what they can do towards resolving this situation. Public support will naturally make the Government's efforts much more effective in achieving a real reduction in greenhouse gases.

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