



15 July 2019

Climate Change Response (Zero Carbon) Amendment Bill Consultation
Committee Secretariat
Environment Committee
Parliament Buildings
Wellington
Email: zerocarbon@parliament.govt.nz

Dear Sir/Madam

Climate change is a serious and leading threat to health and health equity, both in New Zealand and worldwide. The New Zealand Society of Anaesthetists (NZSA) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Climate Change Response (Zero Carbon) Amendment Bill. This legislation is a key measure towards protecting and improving the health and wellbeing of New Zealanders. It must be fit-for-purpose.

About the NZSA

The NZSA is a professional medical education society, which represents over 650 medical anaesthetists in New Zealand. Our members include specialist anaesthetists in public and private practice, and trainee anaesthetists. We facilitate and promote education and research into anaesthesia and advocate on behalf of our members, and the safety of their patients. As an advocacy organisation, we develop submissions, work collaboratively with key stakeholders, and foster networks of anaesthetists nationwide. The NZSA, established in 1948, also has strong global connections and is a Member Society of the World Federation of Societies of Anaesthesiologists (WFSA).

Overview

The NZSA strongly supports the development of a robust and enforceable Zero Carbon Act, which creates a legally binding commitment to living within 1.5 degrees Celsius of global warming. Setting a long-term legislative target will clearly signal our country's commitment as a signatory to the Paris Agreement, and New Zealand's contribution to global action. New Zealand anaesthetists are very aware of their profession's part to play in limiting climate change and therefore improving health outcomes. We support the formation of a Climate Change Commission to provide independent, expert advice, to set emissions budgets and to hold successive governments to account towards progress made. In principle we support our partner OraTaiao (the New Zealand Climate and Health Council), which has completed a thorough submission on the Bill. We endorse their message that well planned and effective measures to mitigate climate change can have substantial health (and health equity) co-benefits and lead to significant cost savings in the health sector.

Key Points

- Rational, effective and aligned strategies, based on science, are required to inform policy and to achieve success on the scale required in the Bill.



- Scientific enquiry requires funding and support, and mechanisms to embed climate change mitigation and adaptation into research are lacking.
- The Bill's target must be an emissions pathway that limits our contributions to warming to no more than 1.5 degrees Celsius beyond pre-industrial levels. Net zero greenhouse gases (other than biogenic methane) by 2040 is consistent with this target, and methane reduction must be consistent with that of other gases.
- To meet the target, greenhouse gas reduction strategies cannot rely on unproven technologies. But as a technology-dependent profession, we believe that where technical innovations do exist to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, they should be adopted, whenever safe and practicable. Currently our profession relies heavily on carbon-intensive procurement chains. PHARMAC and other government agencies involved in this procurement will be required to act for this to change.
- Mechanisms need to be robust, and the proposed Climate Change Commission answerable to Parliament, rather than a Minister, to help create a more robust structure. We recommend that the Climate Change Commission has the final say to enable New Zealand to have a path towards zero carbon emissions, untied to political alliance.
- Without legal mechanisms of enforcement, it will be difficult to make progress. The Climate Change Commission will require explicit mechanisms to effectively be able to hold successive governments to account.
- The health sector, both the public and private realms, needs to be deeply integrated into climate change policy and targets. If Clause (L) in the Purpose Statement were to read "the commission must consider, where relevant: the impact on population health, health equity and wellbeing," then population health will be placed at the heart of the Bill. Climate change is, at the human scale, a public health crisis, as well as an environmental one.
- All public services and functions (not solely in health) must take the 1.5 degree Celsius target into account. The health sector will only deliver effective action to reduce emissions if the Bill mandates all government departments' use emissions budgets when making decisions.
- Some DHB's already have experience in the area of carbon measurement and reduction, and mechanisms to share knowledge and successful strategies must be facilitated.
- Collaboration with tangata whenua and Pacific partners is vital to developing future solutions, which are inclusive and support these communities.

Summary

The NZSA supports emissions reductions targeted at limiting temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius. Legislation to achieve this target will need to be robust, enforceable, durable and take into account issues of equity, vulnerability, and public health. Legislation must also be rationally based, pragmatic and all-encompassing. Indeed, it must be very ambitious.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. We are happy to answer any questions on our submission and to appear before the Environmental Select Committee if required.



Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kathryn Hagen", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dr Kathryn Hagen
President