

To: Climate Change Commission / He Pou a Rangi

From: NZEI Te Riu Roa

RE: Climate Change Commission Draft Advice

27 March 2021

## **Background**

NZEI Te Riu Roa is the union for almost 50,000 principals, teachers, support staff and other education professionals who work in primary, area and secondary schools, early childhood centres, special education and school advisory services.

As educators, we are in effect 'second responders' in our communities. We see first hand the impacts that social, economic and environmental crises have on tamariki, families, whānau and the wider community. We share with many others in our communities a genuine sense of urgency and a desire to see transformational action.

As we stand on the brink of climate collapse, we must be prepared to follow the leadership of indigenous communities who have for so long been fighting to protect the whenua from the impacts of pollution and climate change.

Meaningful action on climate change will require genuine engagement with Tangata Whenua, unions, young people, disabled people and all structurally oppressed groups. We encourage the Commission to continue to take up the many offers from community organisations, including unions, that have been made to engage with the recommendations in the draft report.

Ngā mihi  
Liam Rutherford  
President  
NZEI Te Riu Roa

## General response to Commission's draft report

We support the Prime Minister's goal and aspiration to make Aotearoa New Zealand the best place in the world to be a child. How we respond to the challenges presented by climate change will directly impact on our children's future quality of life. There are already clear indications that schools, kura, early childhood centres and their communities are going to be confronted with, and have to deal with, the impacts of climate change, such as [inundation from sea level rise](#).

The Commission's draft advice is comprehensive and sets out clearly the challenges we face as a nation if we are to reduce our emissions to the extent that is needed in the timeframe that is required. There are many areas, however, where we feel the Commission should recommend a more ambitious approach. In answer to the specific feedback questions posed by the Commission:

**1. Do you agree that the emissions budgets we have proposed would put Aotearoa on course to meet the 2050 emissions targets?**

*Disagree. The first three carbon budgets take a very cautious and incremental approach to reducing emissions, requiring larger cuts in later years. The Commission's proposed approach risks passing many tipping points. We must aim for the most ambitious climate plan, not the least. Our emissions budgets should also reflect our obligation as a developed nation to support global equity on climate targets.*

**2. Do you agree we have struck a fair balance between requiring the current generation to take action, and leaving future generations to do more work to meet the 2050 target and beyond?**

*Disagree. The recommendations unfairly burden future generations. In addition, we need to ensure that the costs of transitioning to a low carbon economy do not regressively impact low-income communities.*

**3. Do you agree with the changes we have suggested to make the NDC compatible with the 1.5°C goal?**

*Disagree. The Commission should publish and recommend to the Government a 2030 target that reflects our outsized carbon footprint and historic responsibility for causing climate change. This should be met primarily through domestic emissions reductions, with offshore mitigation only being a last resort. In addition, the government should budget for climate finance to support communities on the frontlines of climate change to adapt.*

**4. Do you agree with our approach to meet the 2050 target that prioritises growing new native forests to provide a long-term store of carbon?**

*Agree. We support the commission's focus on large reductions of carbon dioxide with as little reliance on emission removals by forestry as possible. Our approach to forestry must consider how sovereignty will be returned to mana whenua to manage land, to uphold article 2 of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.*

In addition, we provide further specific feedback below, and would welcome further engagement with the Commission regarding these points.

### **Further feedback**

We applaud the many decarbonisation initiatives already underway. In particular, we welcome the work the government is putting into fund the removal of coal-fired boilers in schools, although in that regard we have joined with other organisations in requesting [more funding be set aside in Budget 2022](#) to continue this process, in light of the commitment the government has made to ensure all school boilers are converted to renewable energy by 2025. EECA's own estimate is that hundreds of coal, diesel and gas-fired boilers remain in schools and this needs to be attended to as an urgent priority.

We also see great opportunity for the solarisation of schools and the physical upgrade of buildings.

However, we would argue that it is equally critical to address the deficits in our social structures, including, but not limited to, our education system. Much of our submission therefore speaks to these broader equity issues, which are inextricably linked to our ability as a nation to respond and adapt to climate change.

### **1. Impacts of climate change on Māori**

Among the most vulnerable will be many Māori workers and their communities. Māori communities are already dealing with the impacts of climate change as they endure drought in the Far North and inundation of marae and urupa. Anything less than a transformative approach to cutting emissions will have severe consequences for Māori. We must act decisively to uphold our Tiriti responsibilities.

The draft report mentions the specific challenges Māori will face and touches on the need for central and local governments to build a genuine, active and enduring partnership with iwi/Māori (p. 40). We support this recommendation and note that the Commission recommends that by 31 December 2022 the government publish a plan that:

- Gives effect to the He Ara Waiora tikanga.
- Includes pathways and actions to remove barriers to participation for iwi/Māori.
- Enables iwi/Māori to exercise rangatiratanga and kaitiakitanga.

We also note and endorse the proposal (p. 130) to have Crown agencies work collaboratively to estimate a Māori emissions profile across iwi takiwā, which would support iwi/Māori-collectives to control their own emissions.

**Recommendation:** The timeframe for the government to publish its plan to give effect to the He Ara Waiora tikanga should be pulled back to 31 March 2022 (to allow for the production first of its overall Emissions Reduction Plan) and then reviewed again 6 months later.

### **Access to information by tamariki Māori**

The pandemic has shown us that equal access to new information, technology, employment and enterprise opportunities is crucial.

**Recommendation:** All tamariki should be supported to access learning through online, hard pack and other mechanisms. This will become increasingly important as online platforms and options become more common. This form of learning should be comprehensive and appropriate from the start, involving families and whānau as much as possible, and there should be equitable access to resources.

### **Upholding rangatiratanga**

The tools we need to reach our targets and address climate change in Aotearoa already exist, and have been practiced for centuries by Indigenous communities. We must recognise and uplift the knowledge and indigenous wisdom that will help get through the climate crisis and has long been held by Māori in Aotearoa and by Indigenous peoples all over the world. As we sit on the brink of environmental collapse, we must follow the leadership of Indigenous communities who have for so long been fighting for the protection of Papatūānuku, and those communities on the frontlines of pollution and climate impacts.

**Recommendation:** The government should support Māori governance of taonga by:

- Creating binding best practices that support rangatiratanga of land, water and air with whānau, hapū, iwi and uphold Tiriti claims
- Giving full effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi by initiating a process to implement the recommendations outlined by the Matike Mai report, in coordination with whānau, hapū and iwi
- Expediting, not delaying, Tiriti claims.

In addition, the articles of Te Tiriti should be integrated throughout the policy recommendations instead of using the Treaty Principles.

## **2. Pacific communities and climate change**

There are only 3 sentences within the entire draft report where the impact of climate change on Pacific communities is mentioned. Pacific households in Aotearoa often earn less than other households, and as such may find it more difficult to transition. They are also intimately

connected to climate change via their family connections in the Pacific, where communities and whole countries are already being inundated. In so many ways Pacific people are on the frontline of climate change. Again, to uphold our responsibilities in the Pacific, Aotearoa must act decisively to cut emissions.

**Recommendation:** Our climate response must ensure there is adequate financial support for Pacific communities both within Aotearoa and throughout the Pacific to adapt to climate change.

**Recommendation:** The government must also provide financial support for the management of conflict and grievance processes for Pacific communities as, inevitably, entire communities are forced to move from their home territories onto other communities' land.

### **3. Just/Equitable Transition for Workers**

The Commission's report uses the terminology 'equitable transition' as a proxy for the more commonly used term, just transition. We suggest the Commission use the word 'Just' as it is the terminology commonly used globally.

Sustainable Development Goals 1 (no poverty), 8 (ensuring decent work), and 10 (reduced inequalities) all align with the concept of a just transition. Just transition measures can mitigate the adverse impacts of economic and societal transition, protect workers, communities and vulnerable groups, and make sure that no one is left behind. A well-managed transition can also contribute to building community resilience.

To do this it is necessary to promote a social dialogue that includes all relevant stakeholders and addresses existing inequalities. The Nationally Determined Contribution process is a key opportunity to develop inclusive, participatory, equitable and gender-responsive approaches to our climate change response.

**Recommendation:** Policy processes should facilitate the inclusion and engagement of different actors and provide a space for all sectors of the community to contribute to the process.

#### **The role of unions**

Climate change will affect us all, but it will affect marginalised groups most profoundly. Moreover, the education workforce will lose jobs if the economy is not carefully transitioned. It is good to see strong support in the draft report for an 'equitable transition', including regarding addressing the employment impacts generated by climate change through redeployment and investing in skills development, particularly for Māori, Pasifika, young people, people with disabilities and low-paid workers. However, while there is brief discussion of the importance of genuine engagement, including with iwi, there is no mention of unions.

Working people in their unions need to be fully involved in the decisions that affect their jobs. Over 320,000 people in Aotearoa are members of unions. Trade unions can and should play a

significant role in helping determine social protection policy measures, as should other civil society organisations.

**Recommendation:** The final report should make explicit mention of the role that unions will need to play in supporting and enabling a just/equitable transition.

#### **4. Gender and a Just Transition**

Gender is a key component for a just transition. Very often, the industries that are identified as transition industries tend to be ones that have traditionally been male-dominated. However, during the 2020 lockdowns, we saw how crucial work that involves the care, protection and development of others - an industry dominated by women workers - became. A genuinely just transition will require policies that support equitable participation in the workforce and valuation of the care economy as well as women's informal work.

**Recommendation:** Ensure that any just transition process is gender-responsive and that the role of caring work, including education, is adequately valued and compensated.

#### **5. Youth and a Just Transition**

Transitioning to a low-carbon economy will affect youth in particular, because their future and livelihoods are at stake, and because they are the workforce of the future and will experience unique struggles and opportunities. Addressing the issues faced by youth in a just transition includes equipping young people with the capacity to be involved in decision-making, keeping processes youth-centred.

Social protection systems will also be essential to shield youth from adverse impacts to their education, development, health, and safety during large-scale economic and societal transformation.

**Recommendation:** Youth must be guaranteed the right to participation in local, national and international climate processes.

#### **6. Disabled people and a Just Transition**

Climate change will negatively and disproportionately impact disabled people and people with additional learning needs. As the climate crisis escalates, we need policies that will not only uphold disability rights and ensure disabled people's full participation, but ensure that their abilities as expert problem solvers both regarding their own issues and as innovators are fully engaged.

A recent New Zealand Council for Educational Research [report](#) notes the importance of cultivating educational opportunities that harness the energy and creative capacities that diverse young people, including young learners with disabilities, can bring to innovation and problem-solving in a low-emissions future. We need to ensure we finance research into new

technologies that support diverse learners and disabled people to come up with innovative solutions to climate change. This will benefit not just the climate, but the economy and wellbeing of all of us.

**Recommendation:** Increase investment in all aspects of Learning Support, and provide financial support for research into new technologies that support diverse learners and disabled people to address the impacts of climate change.

**Recommendation:** We endorse the recommendation of the Disabled People's Assembly that the Climate Change Commission set up a disability forum or committee to lead and support its work in relation to climate change and climate justice for disabled people.

**Recommendation:** We endorse the recommendation of the Disabled People's Assembly that the Climate Change Commission advice contains a specific recommendation on a just transition to a low-carbon economy for disabled people. This recommendation should recognise disabled people as experts in their own lives and that their leadership should be supported in the response to climate change.

## 7. Equity in education

Climate change is a complex, intersectional problem that will require attention to social and economic issues, hand in hand with ecological ones. Education has a huge role to play here. The draft report briefly mentions current and historical equity issues that the education system will need to address, particularly for Māori, so that everyone can participate in education and training.

**Recommendation:** Principles of equity, inclusion, and social justice need to underpin Aotearoa's response to climate change, including within education.

## 8. Investment in education

The failings in the market model are now stark: we face a teacher shortage crisis; over-supply of services in some areas, but a lack of quality of provision in others; variable quality in provision; and a weak regulatory framework.

There is an [expectation that at Year 7 and 8](#), students have careers education as part of their learning. If we are to grow learners ready for the future of work in a low carbon economy, it will be necessary to train more teachers. Schools and the Ministry of Education will also need additional investment to meet the challenges of climate change.

### **Recommendations:**

- Make teacher education fees-free for students training

- Incentivise entry into teaching by introducing voluntary bonding for all initial teacher education
- *Something about the staffing review?*
- Review how careers education is undertaken so that climate change and its impacts are taught

## 9. Climate change education

The education sector has huge potential to help our society respond and adapt to climate change. Indeed, global climate change agreements point to the importance of education and training in responding to climate change.

Yet in Aotearoa New Zealand, as with many other countries, there is little evidence of an integrated approach to climate change education - in terms, for instance, of teaching young people about the science of climate change, as well as about civic engagement and maintaining resiliency during a period of rapid and rolling change.

Every student by right should have access to comprehensive, universally accessible education about the scientific, social, economic and cultural impacts of climate change, and how they can be involved in social action on climate change.

### Recommendations:

- The current curriculum refresh should incorporate climate change education as a core part of the national curriculum, as per NZ Histories.
- Climate change education should be accessible at every year level.
- In addition to the scientific aspects, climate change education should address social, economic and cultural issues and be grounded in Mātauranga Māori.

### Carbon calculators

Different institutions should be enabled to gather emissions data at the community and household level. A number of tools have been developed to measure carbon emissions. EKOS has developed one specifically for schools, and the group Wise Response has undertaken a review of carbon tracking tools best suited for domestic use. In addition, EKOS, in combination with my own school, Ross Intermediate, has developed a carbon tracking tool tailored specifically for schools.

A carbon footprint calculator could be integrated into the curriculum from as early as year 6. This would provide cross-curriculum learning, as students have to do some investigation/observation, maths, science, writing and then identify actions they can take to reduce their carbon footprint.

**Recommendation:** As part of a nationwide response to reducing carbon emissions, students should be encouraged to track carbon emission in their schools and homes.



## 10. State sector procurement

As a procurer of services and equipment, government has an important role to play in decarbonising demand for goods and services. Social procurement is an important vehicle for the implementation of climate change targets, particularly if the government is to meet its own goals of decarbonising the state sector by 2025. As part of a Just Transition any such procurement should meet public sector commitments to pay a Living Wage.

**Recommendation:** the government should establish low carbon standards for state sector procurement as part of its commitment to decarbonise the state sector by 2025. Any such procurement should pay the Living Wage or use Living Wage accredited companies. Any such standards should also adhere to the new standards for buildings, waste water, etc.

## 11. State sector investment

The government also plays a significant role in the domestic economy and the wider global economy and environment via its ACC fund investments and the Superfund.

As [350 Aotearoa has stated](#), “New Zealanders should not be funding the climate crisis through levies to a public fund that is concerned with keeping citizens safe and healthy. Public money should be invested in the public good, not in fossil fuel companies that are directly responsible for the majority of global emissions and are causing climate change.”

**Recommendation:** the government should align its ACC and Superfund investments with the new standard for default Kiwisaver funds that was announced in March 2020, which set a mandate for funds to exclude investments in fossil fuels by 2021.

## 12. Education and training

Education and training are identified as critical factors in enabling a successful transition to a low emissions economy. There is an important focus in the draft report not just on ensuring people develop the skills that will be needed in a changing labour market, but also on the importance of lifelong learning. We will need pathways, however, to support and inspire young people to take up new opportunities in an ever-changing environment.

A recent [survey](#) by the New Zealand Council for Educational Research highlighted that young people currently have few opportunities to learn about the career pathways that may be available to them in a low-carbon world.

**Recommendation:** Educators in primary and secondary schools must be supported to build their own knowledge about the learning and work opportunities that may be generated as society seeks to stem, mitigate and adapt to climate change.

### 13. Transport

Car dependence and urban sprawl are one of the biggest contributors to climate change, road deaths, social exclusion and isolation. Furthermore, they entrench social inequalities and disconnection, particularly for disabled people.

We need to completely transform the way New Zealanders get around, with a much stronger focus on investing in walking, cycling and electrified public transport. Transport systems need to work for disabled people and we need to ensure urban and transport planning removes barriers for disabled communities. There are also many co-benefits for children's health and wellbeing of encouraging walking/cycling/bus transport to school. In doing so, we will support children to be more healthy, active and independent.

Schools on their own have limited ability to influence transport patterns, and families are often constrained by time and economics. We are therefore pleased to see that the draft report recommends a coordinated approach to decision-making on transport across Government agencies and local councils.

**Recommendation:** involve tamariki, parents and school communities in developing low-emission transport options, with a particular focus on walking, cycling and public transport.

**Recommendation:** We endorse the Disabled People's Assembly recommendations, that:

- the Climate Change Commission advises Government to set up a grant or subsidy to support disabled people to purchase suitable electric vehicles so that disabled people who need larger vehicles to transport wheelchairs are not disadvantaged by the phasing out of more affordable petrol and diesel versions
- the Climate Change Commission provides explicit advice to Government that footpaths should be well maintained, and that bikes, scooters and other micro mobility devices should not generally be allowed on footpaths
- the Climate Change Commission provides advice to Government on the need for accessible public transport and targeted fair subsidies for disabled people.