

It's good to vote - on the environment

"The Earth is the Lord's, and all that is in it; The world, and those who live in it" Psalm 24:1

Climate Change

What's the problem all about?

- Climate change caused by human activity is causing massive disruption to our environment, and to communities around the world who are experiencing its effects.
- Every country has a responsibility to reduce its own contribution to climate change through policies that will transition our economy away from fossil fuels and polluting agriculture and towards a low carbon future.
- The government has currently committed to reduce NZ's greenhouse gas emissions 11% below 1990 levels by 2030. New Zealand's carbon emissions have risen steadily since 1990 by over 40%, and are projected to continue to increase under current policy settings.

See how New Zealand's climate action compares to other countries' commitments here:

<http://climateactiontracker.org/countries/newzealand.html>

Issues that can be addressed by government:

- **Implementing a Zero Carbon Act:** a Zero Carbon Act, as recommended by Generation Zero, the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment, and the Council for International Development would help New Zealand reduce its emissions by requiring governments to have binding 5 year targets in emissions reductions to meet, and set up an independent body of experts to monitor how government is meeting those and ways that they can do it better.
- **Putting an effective price on carbon emissions:** making industries that produce a lot of pollution pay for the negative environmental effects helps incentivise cleaner forms of energy and more sustainable behaviour. Previously, New Zealand's price on carbon, through the Emissions Trading Scheme, has had limited success in reducing emissions due to its low price and the fact that many of our most polluting industries (such as agriculture) are exempt from the system.
- **Climate change refugees:** currently, those displaced by climate change effects such as rising sea levels, or because they can no longer grow crops, are not able to claim refugee status. Welcoming our neighbours, particularly from the Pacific, who will increasingly need to find new homes due to climate change can be done partly through legislation which recognises the status of climate refugees.

Water:

What's the freshwater issue all about?

- New Zealand's waterways are increasingly polluted, with seventy percent of the combined length of New Zealand rivers now failing to meet the acceptable swimming standard. This is a threat to both human and ecological health.
- The health of our waterways is affected by runoff from
 - Sediment: Fine material from deforestation
 - Nutrients: Nitrogen and phosphorus from livestock urine and fertilizer
 - Bacteria: E. Coli from livestock excrement

For an overview of the state of New Zealand's freshwater ecosystems, look here:

http://www.mfe.govt.nz/sites/default/files/media/Environmental%20reporting/our-fresh-water-at-a-glance_0.pdf

Issues that can be addressed by government:

- **Reducing cow numbers and enabling varied agriculture** - Between 1998 and 2009, nitrogen pollution worsened more in New Zealand than in any other OECD country. Conversions of forestry and sheep/beef farms to dairying are increasing both nitrogen and phosphorous pollution. A transition of land use to more sustainable practices that do not produce as much nitrogen runoff is needed to reverse this trend.
- **Incentivising water friendly farming** - Subsidised irrigation projects make it possible for more land areas to be used for intensive agriculture - areas that would normally be too dry to support livestock, especially dairy cattle. It leads to the replacement of natural vegetation, including forests, with pastures that allow for greater run off. Irrigation saturates the soil, encouraging runoff and leaching of contaminants into waterways. Through water extraction, it reduces groundwater levels and river flow, changing natural processes that would normally help dilute contaminants.

More information on climate change and water:

The Spinoff is a great resource for party policies on different issues. For the environment topics of climate change and water see: <http://policy.thespinoff.co.nz/topic/Environment>

Generation Zero's Zero Carbon Act proposal, as well as the reasoning behind it can be found here: <https://zerocarbonact.nz/>

Backing the Act: For a blog post about why the Christian World Service and 13 other development organisations are calling for a Zero Carbon Act, read: <https://candour.presbyterian.org.nz/2017/08/25/election-series-back-the-plan-for-a-zero-carbon-act/>

Choose Clean Water NZ: For videos and community stories about the state of our waterways, visit: <https://www.facebook.com/choosecleanwaternz/>

Greenpeace report on the effects of intensive livestock farming on our health:

<http://www.greenpeace.org/new-zealand/Global/new-zealand/P3/publications/Agriculture/Greenpeace-Sick-of-too-many-cows-report-2017.pdf>