

1. THE ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN MEETING NEW ZEALAND'S CLIMATE CHANGE TARGET

Officer responsible Director of Policy	Author Stuart Woods, DDI 3711615
Corporate Plan Output: Corporate Policy	

The purpose of this report is to seek approval of a proposed submission on the Interim Report of the Local Government and Environment Select Committee on "Inquiry into the role of local government in meeting New Zealand's climate change target".

This report has been presented to the Environment Committee, the Resource Management Committee and the Strategy and Resources Committee for consideration.

An officer team comprising staff from several different units has compiled the draft submission (see attached). The closing date for the submission was 15 March 2001, but an extension for a late submission has been received from the Select Committee Clerk.

The Local Government and Environment Select Committee is currently conducting an inquiry into the role that local government can play in meeting New Zealand's climate change targets. The inquiry is not complete, and the Select Committee has sought comment back on the Interim Report (which may be found at the following web site address: www.gp.co.nz/wooc/i-papers/i9a-climate.html).

The Select Committee is looking to address how to translate into reality the Government's commitments to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. It is being recognised by the Select Committee as crucial that central and local government must work together to maximise the opportunities and likelihood of successfully addressing the (central government) commitments.

The Interim Report reiterates the increasing scientific agreement that global warming is occurring (whatever the reasons) and that human activity is contributing in some way. Given this, there is a need for a response, and the report outlines the international activities seeking an organised response from the international community. In this context and under the Kyoto Protocol, New Zealand has made a commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to the 1990 levels, on average, during the period 2008-2012. However, demonstrable progress towards achieving this target is required by 2005. The Government has indicated that it intends to ratify the Kyoto Protocol in mid 2002.

The Interim Report reviews potential areas in which local government could possibly contribute and assist in meeting the targets and poses a number of questions related to these areas. The potential contributions relate to:

- Which Greenhouse gases can local government influence
- In-house energy use
- Land use planning
- Transport planning and operations
- Water, waste and sewage
- Afforestation and conservation
- Inspecting for legislative compliance
- Education and information dissemination

A meeting on these matters was held at Environment Canterbury on Monday 19 February, which was run by EECA and MfE staff. It was indicated there that this submission process and report was but one opportunity and stage of the development of the Government's responses to greenhouse gas emissions and climate change to be conducted through this year. Other stages included release of a climate change consultation document (April 2001), a public consultation process (May-June 2001) and the development of legislation late in 2001.

The submission is based on three key sections: an overview, another addressing each of the questions posed in the Interim Report and the remaining section raising more general considerations. The main points of interest in the proposed attached Council submission are that:

- The Council endorses the partnership philosophy outlined in the Interim Report, and is willing to play its part in seeking to address the country's commitments in relation to greenhouse gas emissions.
- The Council considers that central government should be taking the lead role and demonstrate a strong proactive leadership in policies, funding and project support. It should also undertake education of the general public on these environmental issues.
- The Interim Report shows nothing of what the national responses are going to be.

- The Council is already active in this area and has already adopted policies and implemented projects addressing the issue.
- The Council wishes to register its interest in continuing to participate in the development of the responses to address the climate change targets associated with greenhouse gas emissions.
- EECA should continue and be recognised as vital by continuing to attract central government funding, support and encouragement.
- The Minister for Local Government should be added to the group of Ministers overseeing climate change policy.
- Legislation will be needed to enable local government to (better) participate in some matters.
- There are inconsistencies in central government actions apparent now regarding a national response, such as allowing hydro-power stations to operate below generating capacity whilst allowing fossil-fuelled power stations to run near capacity.
- Transport related works are a major local government expenditure. Transport is the single largest CO₂ producer in Christchurch, producing some 50% of CO₂ emissions. It is the only significant sector still significantly increasing its production of CO₂. The transport/roading sector has been under central government review with regard to its management, funding and pricing for some years now. Therefore, this inquiry provides a good opportunity to look to integrate central government's reviews of roading and land transport with climate change objectives.

Recommendation: That the Council approve the proposed submission on the Interim Report of the Local Government and Environment Select Committee on "Inquiry into the role of local government in meeting New Zealand's climate change target", as amended.