

Rt. Hon. Jacinda Ardern
Prime Minister
Parliament Buildings
Wellington

CC: Hon. Grant Robertson; Hon. David Parker; Hon. Phil Twyford; Hon. Shane Jones; Hon. James Shaw

17 April 2020

Dear Prime Minister,

Reviving the economy, and the environment

Lawyers for Climate Action NZ Inc is a group of over 250 lawyers who seek to advocate for legislation and policies to ensure New Zealand meets or exceeds its commitment under the Paris Agreement to achieve net zero carbon emissions as soon as possible and no later than 2050.

We refer to the recent letter of 7 April 2020 to the Government from the Climate Change Commission and the joint letter of 8 April 2020 from Ecologic, EDS, Generation Zero, Forest & Bird, Greenpeace NZ and WWF-NZ regarding Government plans for economic recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic.

We endorse the views expressed by those organisations, and in particular their urging that the Government's response to COVID-19 represents a unique opportunity to promote a sustainable and climate-resilient economy in Aotearoa.

Lawyers for Climate Action NZ believes that everyone has the human right to a sustainable environment that is protected for the benefit of present and future generations.

The fiscal stimulus package required to respond to COVID-19 will result in tens of billions of dollars of debt to be repaid by the next generation of taxpayers. Given that this generation also faces a climate crisis if decisive action is not taken urgently, we believe that the Government is under an obligation to use these funds to reset the economic system in a way that also protects the environment and ensures a low emissions future.

The urgency of restarting business should not be at the expense of articulating and applying appropriate principles of inclusivity, sustainability and climate-resilience. In particular, it is essential that we remain focused and on-track to meet the goal of net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

In our view, priority projects should include:

- building a sustainable transport network that prioritises rail, light rail, cycling, walking and public transport over petrol and diesel cars and trucks;
- supporting electric transport options;

- improving the energy efficiency of our homes and ensuring new housing is built in a way that minimises energy use (including transport) over the lifetime of the building;
- improving the sustainability of our agriculture sector; and
- restoring essential natural resources: our forests, rivers, lakes, wetlands and coastal waters.

We also consider that taxpayer-backed bailouts of large businesses should not be *ex gratia*. Where feasible they should be conditional on the recipients contributing to these social and environmental priorities. For example, businesses which make a significant direct or indirect contribution to greenhouse gas emissions should be required to commit to emission reduction targets by 2030 with the obligation to report annually on progress against those targets.

We urge the Government to ensure that the economic recovery from the pandemic is used as an opportunity to put our economy on a path towards a zero-carbon and environmentally sustainable future.

Yours faithfully,



Jenny Cooper QC
President
Lawyers for Climate Action NZ Inc.



James Every-Palmer QC
Treasurer
Lawyers for Climate Action NZ Inc.