

PRESS RELEASE

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BUDGET 2020: OUR EMISSIONS FUTURE IS IN THE HANDS OF CABINET

The 2020 Budget announcement suggests that the Government has been listening to the chorus of voices describing the current crisis as a unique opportunity to “build back better” and to “hit the reset button”, with both phrases appearing in the Minister’s speech. And indeed, the announcement showed welcome glimpses of a greener and more pleasant future, most notably with the commendable \$1 billion green jobs package.

But despite the rhetoric, there was not much evidence that the reset button has actually been pushed yet, at least as far as climate is concerned. The Budget is missing any clear commitment to target spending towards the investments required to reduce our emissions by 2030 and keep global warming to 1.5°.

The investment in rail and ferry upgrades is a step in the right direction but, to achieve our climate goals, we need to effectively de-carbonise transport by 2030 – in other words, we need to largely replace petrol and diesel private vehicles with alternative forms of transport. There is so far little sign that transport investment will be focused on achieving that “reset”.

Equally, it is difficult to see any serious investment in this Budget in supporting transformational change in the agriculture sector, our biggest producer of emissions.

Finally, no further details were offered in the Budget on how the billions allocated to “shovel ready” projects will be spent. While several Ministers have indicated that a “climate-lens” will be applied, which is encouraging, the critical decisions are yet to be made and will be taken around the Cabinet table, where good intentions are liable to fall victim to horse-trading.

Now, more than ever, our climate and our future is in the hands of Cabinet. As Lawyers for Climate Action NZ has already said in its recent letters to Government, we believe the Government has both a moral and a legal obligation to use the funds now at its disposal to help New Zealand to transition to a low-emissions and climate-resilient economy.

Generalised assurances from Ministers that sustainability will be taken into account are no substitute for clear criteria, robust analysis, and transparent decision-making. We again call on the Government to confirm that the direct and indirect lifetime impact of each project on greenhouse gas emissions will be made a core part of the assessment of all post-COVID-19 stimulus spending.

Further information:

For more information about LCANZI please see our website: www.lawyersforclimateaction.nz

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