



29 April 2024

OIAD-1038

9(2)a

Tēnā koe 9(2)a ,

Thank you for your email of 6 April 2024 to the Ministry for the Environment (the Ministry) requesting the following under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act):

1. *Why do Government Departments, including MfE and the CCC refer to 'settled science'. Surely real science is never settled?*
2. *Can MfE please confirm the certainty of your "scientific consensus", that may show that human caused GHG emissions can have a detrimental affect on our weather.*

Thank you also for your follow-up email on 8 April 2024 where you amended your request to add the following:

3. *New Zealand declared a climate emergency under the previous Government. NZ declared to comply with the findings of the IPCC that have since been changed. The mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions is now not a serious concern, so the committed actions of the previous Government need to be reviewed and changed to reflect the real science that is now showing that emissions are not dangerous. The Coalition Government needs to do better than Labour and the Green Parties attempts. Please advise what action is being taken to amend and cancel the mitigation actions that are now not required?*
4. *Adaption for weather events remains important and should now be an action plan that is not related to emissions. Please confirm the status of the Adaption Plan.*
5. *As noted in the Climate Emergency declaration there are assumed "risks for workers and communities currently reliant on carbon-intensive sectors". Please confirm what these "risks" were and do they still exist in 2024?*
6. *Based on the many scientific changes during the past four years it must be time to cancel the Climate Emergency declaration. Please confirm what evidence you have to continue with this commitment?*
7. *Why does New Zealand need to continue with a plan to be "net carbon zero" in 2024 and beyond? It is noted that off shore oil and gas exploration consents and related work has been reinstated as step in the changed plan.*

The Ministry has provided a response to each of your questions:

1. ***Why do Government Departments, including MfE and the CCC refer to 'settled science'. Surely real science is never settled?***

The Ministry's *Strategic Intentions 2023-27* and *Science Strategy* include the operating principle that our advice, decisions and actions are grounded in science and evidence. The Ministry regularly publishes reports on the latest science through the Environmental Reports and funds further research through the Environment and Climate Research Strategy. The Ministry accepts the data, evidence, and global scientific consensus on climate change summarised by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and uses this knowledge to inform policy decision making.

The Ministry does not hold information on the use of climate language by other government departments. The Climate Change Commission (CCC) is an independent Crown entity and is not a part of the Ministry. The CCC's independent reports on climate science considerations can be found on its website.

2. Can MfE please confirm the certainty of your "scientific consensus", that may show that human caused GHG emissions can have a detrimental affect on our weather.

The science of human-induced climate change is clearly explained in numerous peer-reviewed, publicly available papers, following the traditional and trusted scientific method. Hundreds of scientists and researchers from around the globe participate in the IPCC working groups, reviewing thousands of these papers. This is summarised in the IPCC Sixth Assessment Report, which provides a comprehensive summary of the state of scientific, technical, and socio-economic knowledge on climate change, its impacts and future risks, and options for adaptation and mitigation. The Sixth Assessment Report is available at: [Sixth Assessment Report — IPCC](#).

The New Zealand Government is responding to human-induced climate change using a scientific lens. Scientific evidence of climate change and its influence on extreme weather is unequivocal. The Government accepts the knowledge of the global scientific consensus on human-induced climate change summarised by the IPCC Assessment Reports.

3. New Zealand declared a climate emergency under the previous Government. NZ declared to comply with the findings of the IPCC that have since been changed. The mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions is now not a serious concern so the committed actions of the previous Government need to be reviewed and changed to reflect the real science that is now showing that emissions are not dangerous. The Coalition Government needs to do better than Labour and the Green Parties attempts. Please advise what action is being taken to amend and cancel the mitigation actions that are now not required?

The New Zealand Government recently announced nine targets to help improve the lives of New Zealanders. The Government's target of *Reduced net greenhouse gas emissions* will ensure that we are on track to meet New Zealand's 2050 net zero climate change targets.

Information and statements on the Government's plans, expectations, and agreements on climate change can be found on the Beehive website. Minister for Climate Change Hon Simon Watts has made a number of announcements on this, which are published here: beehive.govt.nz/portfolio/nationalactnew-zealand-first-coalition-government-2023-2026/climate-change.

4. *Adaption for weather events remains important and should now be an action plan that is not related to emissions. Please confirm the status of the Adaption Plan.*

As outlined in the national adaptation plan, every two years, He Pou a Rangi – the Climate Change Commission reports to the Minister of Climate Change on the implementation and effectiveness of the national adaptation plan. The Minister responds to these reports within six months of receiving them. This provides an opportunity for the Government to adjust actions and manage uncertainty and risk. The Government also has international commitments to report on Aotearoa New Zealand’s progress towards building resilience. Further information of the first assessment of the national adaptation plan, due to be published in 2024, can be found on the Commission’s website.

5. *As noted in the Climate Emergency declaration there are assumed "risks for workers and communities currently reliant on carbon-intensive sectors". Please confirm what these "risks" were and do they still exist in 2024?*

The Ministry does not hold any information on the process or advice that informed reference to “risks for workers and communities currently reliant on carbon-intensive sectors” as mentioned as a part of the Climate Emergency Declaration parliamentary announcement in 2020 by the sixth Labour Government. I am also not aware of any other government organisation that holds this information. I am therefore refusing this question under Section 18(g) of the Act.

Broader information about just and equitable climate transition can be found in publicly available documents, such as the first Emissions Reduction Plan, the Paris Agreement, and the *Supporting the Conditions for a Just Transition Internationally* declaration.

6. *Based on the many scientific changes during the past four years it must be time to cancel the Climate Emergency declaration. Please confirm what evidence you have to continue with this commitment?*

The scientific findings on climate change are summarised in the IPCC Sixth Assessment Report, which provides a comprehensive summary of the state of scientific, technical, and socio-economic knowledge on climate change, its impacts and future risks, and options for adaptation and mitigation. The Sixth Assessment Report is available at: [Sixth Assessment Report — IPCC](#). These findings continue to support the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and accelerated implementation of adaptation actions in order to reduce projected losses and damages for humans and ecosystems, and deliver many co-benefits, especially for air quality and health.

Information and statements on the Government’s plans, expectations, and agreements on climate change can be found on the Beehive website.

7. Why does New Zealand need to continue with a plan to be "net carbon zero" in 2024 and beyond? It is noted that off shore oil and gas exploration consents and related work has been reinstated as step in the changed plan.

The Climate Change Response (Zero Carbon) Amendment Act 2019 provides a framework by which New Zealand can develop and implement clear and stable climate change policies, including a domestic greenhouse gas emissions reduction target for New Zealand to reduce net emissions of all greenhouse gases (except biogenic methane) to zero by 2050. The Act provides a legal framework to enable New Zealand to meet its international obligations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Kyoto Protocol, and the Paris Agreement.

The New Zealand Government's target of *Reduced net greenhouse gas emissions* will ensure that we are on track to meet New Zealand's 2050 net zero climate change targets. Further information on this target can be found on the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet's website.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Office of the Ombudsman of my decisions relating to this request, in accordance with section 28(3) of the Act. The relevant details can be found on their website at: www.ombudsman.parliament.nz.

Please note that due to the public interest in our work the Ministry publishes responses to requests for official information on our [OIA responses page](#) shortly after the response has been sent. If you have any queries about this, please feel free to contact our Ministerial Services team: ministerials@mfe.govt.nz.

Nāku noa, nā,



Sophie Heighway
Manager – Climate Impacts
Ministry for the Environment | Manatū Mō Te Taiao