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Media Release

Government report confirms need for more action on climate change

The latest in the series of environmental assessment reports from the Ministry for the Environment and Statistics New Zealand confirms the need for more urgent action to curb our burgeoning greenhouse gas emissions.

“*Our Atmosphere and Climate*, released today, confirms that global emissions of carbon dioxide topped 400 parts per million in 2016, the highest for 800,000 years,” said EDS CEO Gary Taylor.

“Domestically, the report reveals that New Zealand’s gross emissions have increased by 24% since 1990. Road transport emissions are really out of control rising a whopping 78% over the same timeframe. Agricultural emissions are also rising.

“Most concerning is that net emissions have risen 64%, a function of a decline in planting of new forests. That is a wake-up call for all of us and we clearly need to do more offsetting while at the same time substantially increasing our mitigation efforts. This will require robust policy changes by Government.

“Transport and agricultural emissions need special attention. It would have been useful to look at how comparative countries are tracking on both of those sectors.

“The report is deliberately not future-focused. It is simply reporting on past trends. It is accurate and useful. It could have been improved by the provision of a graph showing visually what is happening to our emissions over time.

“The report largely confirms in an objective and analytical way what we already know: that New Zealand needs to get better organised to address climate change and needs to do much more to get to our target of reducing emissions by 30% on 2005 levels by 2030.

“The best way to ramp up our efforts is to legislate to set up an independent Climate Commission to plan, recommend, monitor and report on the transition we need to make over the next several decades.

“We need to develop a proper carbon budget, like other countries, to work out the least cost pathway to net zero emissions by mid-century,

“There is a clear majority of parties in the new Parliament that support legislation to do just that. We can only hope that the consensus for a Climate Commission survives the coalition negotiations,” Mr Taylor concluded.