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Media Release

History is being made today: final Climate Commission report says net zero is doable

EDS congratulates the Climate Commission He Pou a Rangi on the release of its final Advice Report to Government, *Ināia tonu nei: a low emissions future for Aotearoa* under the provisions of the Climate Change Response Act 2002.

“The Commission’s final report has taken into account more than 15,000 submissions from members of the public and key interest groups, including from the Environmental Defence Society (EDS),” said EDS CEO Gary Taylor.

“The key changes from the earlier draft version appear to be:

- Changes to the level of emission budgets (which means a slightly harder job to meet net zero)
- Further integration of Treaty obligations
- Further explanation of alternative budget pathways for government to consider
- Some recalibration of the pace and nature of changes required (including decreased uptake of electric vehicles in the early years)
- Further consideration of the issues around the NDC
- More consideration of the ethical implications of change

“Those changes are mostly welcome, but it is disappointing to see continuing light obligations being placed on agriculture. We remain skeptical at the ability of the primary sector’s alternative emissions pricing mechanism, *He Waka Eke Noa*, to deliver as promised and on time.

“Overall, the big take-out is that we now have a clear pathway towards a net zero economy by 2050 with emission reduction budgets every 5 years that will be monitored and reported on.

“Once adopted, this will affect every aspect of our lives as we progressively reduce dependence on fossil fuels and lower methane emissions to stable and sustainable levels.

“The global context is encouraging with big emitting countries like China, Japan, the UK and now the USA moving aggressively to reduce emissions.

“The paths set out by the Commission are affordable and achievable using existing technologies. We can do this if business and communities pull together and if government adopts the Commission’s recommendations and makes the policy shifts required. Yes, there are challenges and the transition to net zero has to be fair to all.

“Given that the Government has the rest of this year to respond to the Commission’s report and finalise its Emissions Reduction Plan, we’d like to see some careful thought given to how climate change policy and biodiversity policy can be more closely aligned. What’s needed are additional pricing mechanisms to incentivise indigenous forest and wetland restoration that will sequester carbon and improve immediate environmental outcomes. There is still an alarming emphasis on sequestration by pines versus natives which is not good from a wider environmental perspective. The Commission has said further work is needed on the ETS to find a better way forward.

“Finally, we will be working co-operatively with business to plan our *Climate Change and Business Conference 2021* in October which will be an opportunity to take early stock of progress and focus on the role of New Zealand business in implementing change consistent with the Commission’s proposed budgets.

“This journey is about modernizing our economy and making it fit for the future world. It’s a truly exciting plan. 2021 is an historical turning point for Aotearoa New Zealand and is the point in time where we begin the transition to a new framing for our economy.

“The Climate Commission has set out its plan and I expect the team of five million will rise to the challenge it has laid down,” Gary Taylor concluded.