

Submission from

Te Hāhi Tūhauwiri

Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

Northern Monthly Meeting

Background

Northern Monthly Meeting is one of the nine Monthly Meetings in the Yearly Meeting of Aotearoa New Zealand. We are made up of Quakers from Auckland and Northland. Quakers in Aotearoa promote simplicity, peace, integrity, community, equity/equality, and sustainability. For many years we have been working on limiting climate change and building resilience to cope with its consequences, individually, locally, and internationally. Over 30 years ago we made this minute:

Integrity of Creation

We acknowledge that this is a deeply religious question, inextricably entwined with justice and peace.

The far-reaching consequences of humankind's entry into the life of the planet, and the escalating exploitation of natural resources today, driven by greed rather than need, have brought us to a place of danger, the risk of destroying human, plant and animal life and at the same time the threat of a breakdown in societies and their economies as efforts are made, or forced upon us, to stem the tide of over-use of resources.

Have we time to overcome these threats? The responsibility is ours. God awaits our response. We must begin with ourselves; we must be protectors rather than protestors, monitoring our own use of materials and making known the steps we take to reduce consumption.

This is not a new subject for Friends. It is not simple. We must approach it with an awareness of its intermeshing with peace and justice. The implications for society of what we may advocate must be understood, and creative means must be found to change the emphasis of our economies so that the real needs of human beings are met, while at the same time we respect and cherish creation.

Minute 27 of Yearly Meeting 1990

Our latest statement on care for the environment and on the climate emergency is:

A Call for Action after Covid-19

HOPE We Quakers find hope in the communal response to the Covid-19 crisis across our nation. The collective action of New Zealanders has demonstrated how much we can achieve together in a short time. We see the current pandemic as a warning which creates an unprecedented opportunity for systemic change and as a call to remodel our nation guided by the principles of sustainability, non-violence, simplicity and equity. This is a transformation that will require redistributive and regenerative

economic, government and social policies that ensure all members of society benefit in an equitable manner

VISION Our vision is of a society that is inclusive and respectful of all people. We affirm the special constitutional position of Māori and a Treaty-based, bi-lateral system of government. We seek government which leads with integrity, shares information based on evidence, and engages with communities prior to decision-making. We oppose violence at every level and look to practices that bring peaceful dialogue and non-violent management of conflict.

SANCTITY Quakers have a strong sense of the sanctity of creation. We are committed to the development of systems and new societal norms to rebalance climate disruption, preserve biodiversity and water quality and enable New Zealanders to live simpler lives within sustainable natural boundaries. We support the use of national resources to provide housing, low-carbon transport, and regenerative food production to benefit future generations.

CONSUMPTION We see that society has been putting profit and consumption above other considerations despite clear evidence that earth's natural limits have been exceeded. Consumer lifestyles have been destroying the natural ecosystems required by future generations. Decades of neoliberal economic and social policies have allowed a few people to set the agenda and benefit disproportionately. This has condemned many to low wages, poverty and insecurity whilst also degrading the environment.

OPPORTUNITY Quakers consider that the current pandemic offers the people of Aotearoa New Zealand a chance to reassess the situation and to create a new sense of community and purpose. The Light of the Spirit has inspired Quakers through the generations into social and environmental action. We see this experience with Covid-19 as the impetus to find a way forward based firmly on the Quaker values of peace, simplicity, and equity

ACTION

Quakers call on every person in Aotearoa New Zealand to bring about whatever changes they can to enable us to live in harmony with one another and with the planet.

Reaction to Climate Change Commission's Draft Report

The Climate Change Commission's recommendations do not go far enough or fast enough.

The Commission admits that their recommendations will leave us falling short of our Nationally Determined Commitment for 2030. As good global citizens with a poor history of polluting the environment and emitting gases that produce climate change, we need to be doing more than the average. Changes to reduce climate change and environmental degradation need to happen urgently so that the burden is not shifted to future generations and communities on the frontlines of climate impacts who have contributed the least to climate change but are paying the highest costs.

A total change of mindset is necessary:

- From consumer society to living simply. From an economy that is characterised by *take, make, and waste* to one that *designs out waste, keeps resources in use and regenerates natural systems*.
- Work for equity and a *just transition*, giving support for vulnerable communities and those regions and workers in industries where job losses will occur. Government policies must increase economic equity and provide affected workers with good, clean, green employment to ensure trust and buy-in from the community
- Educate so that everyone knows the depth, seriousness, and urgency of change. Involve people in the process so they have a sense of ownership and become involved and embrace the changes.
- Provide regular progress updates and stories from people across Aotearoa and the Pacific in areas such as reducing the use of fossil fuels, expanding regenerative farming, communities living locally, reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The Covid-19 epidemic has shown the power of regular progress reports to create a *team of five million*.
- Provide security – not military security but the security of good housing and education, an income sufficient to live on, and equitable access to health services. The military has a huge environmental impact here in Aotearoa and overseas. We believe that preparing for war is wrong. Nation states need to co-operate if we are to overcome the climate emergency, future pandemics, and disasters.
- Work for *climate justice*. As well as being an environmental issue, climate change is a complex social justice issue with the effects being the most devastating for people in poor countries especially those living on Pacific islands that have been so disproportionately affected by climate change.

Do this urgently to save the lives of the next generation, if not our own.