

8 May 2019

Media Release: EDS welcomes release of the Climate Change Response (Zero Carbon) Amendment Bill



EDS is generally supportive of the content of the Climate Change Response (Zero Carbon) Amendment Bill, released today by Climate Change Minister James Shaw.

“The Bill has been a long time in gestation. It sets up an independent Climate Change Commission to provide long-term advice and monitoring on our journey to net zero emissions by 2050,” said EDS CEO Gary Taylor.

“Significantly, the Bill embeds a specific emissions reduction target in primary legislation. This target is set as net zero by 2050 for all greenhouse gases – except biogenic methane (methane produced by agriculture and waste). It allows for CO₂ emissions to be offset by removals.

“For biogenic methane there is a separate target: gross emissions will need to be 10% less by 2030, with further reductions required by 2050.

“This dual target reflects the “two baskets” greenhouse gas approach recommended by the Productivity Commission, in which carbon dioxide and nitrous oxide are treated differently to methane.

“This will be controversial in some quarters but from what we understand of the complex science, it makes sense. Methane is a potent greenhouse gas but is much shorter lived in the atmosphere than CO₂.

“What is positive is that agriculture will be required to make its own reductions in gross methane emissions, initially at an average of 1% per annum for the first 10 years. That is a start, but is on the face of it still highly concessionary to the sector.

“If offsetting is not allowed for on-farm methane then that would seem somewhat counter-intuitive.

“The Bill also proposes five yearly carbon budgets, set well in advance, to provide a predictable pathway towards meeting its targets. The Minister must then create an emissions reduction plan, including sector-specific policies, to meet budgets.”

“On adaptation, a crucially important challenge for New Zealand with our extremely long coastline, the Minister is to prepare an initial national risk assessment, with subsequent assessments to be made by the Commission. National adaptation plans, in response to risk assessments, are to be prepared by the Minister, but with the government’s performance assessed by the Commission through regular progress reports.

“The disappointing element is that the Bill does not yet appear to enjoy complete cross-party support. I had expected that the long gestation period meant it was likely that National would have come fully on board. It appears that National supports the creation of the Commission and the 2 baskets, but not the methane target.

“Certainly we need all parties to at least support the creation of the Climate Commission,” Mr Taylor concluded.

The Bill is available [here](#).