

The Big Ask Summary



Generation Zero

Introduction

On 3 July 2014 Generation Zero released *The Big Ask: One Key Step for Real Climate Action*. This follows our previous report released in May, *A Challenge to Our Leaders: Why New Zealand Needs a Clean Energy Plan*, which called for New Zealand to follow Denmark by developing and implementing a plan to phase out fossil fuels for all our energy and transport needs by 2050. It also laid bare the extreme lack of action from the current Government and the absence of any credible plan for meeting even the current greenhouse gas emissions targets.

The Big Ask looks in greater depth at the Danish energy strategy and how it was developed, and examines action taken by the UK and other countries to ensure a credible plan for climate action. It concludes by proposing one key step Generation Zero wants to see the next New Zealand Government take: introduce a Climate Change Act to sign emissions targets into law and establish an independent Climate Commission to provide expert advice on climate policy and hold the Government accountable. The report features a foreword by economist and author Gareth Morgan, endorsing the “Big Ask”.

Key points

Denmark’s energy strategy shows that a comprehensive plan for a transition to zero fossil fuels by 2050 is possible and can be put into action.

The strategy was developed over a period of three to four years starting with the establishment of the Danish Commission on Climate Change Policy to analyse how to achieve the 2050 goal. It contains a suite of milestones and policy actions, with an estimated total cost of 0.5% of GDP by 2050.

New Zealand’s current emissions targets lack teeth and need a mechanism to ensure the Government takes genuine action to keep up with them.

The current Government has set unconditional targets of reducing net greenhouse gas emissions to 5% below 1990 levels in 2020 and 50% below 1990 levels in 2050. However official projections show these will not be met with current policies and emissions will continue to grow on every possible measure. At present there is no strong means of holding the Government to account and no authoritative independent voice in the debate.

The UK Climate Change Act provides a model for Government commitment and accountability that New Zealand can adopt.

The Act requires the Government to produce credible plans to meet future emissions targets and makes the issue of climate change less politicised through legislated targets and an independent system of accountability. Other countries including Finland and Denmark have recently followed by implementing their own Climate Change Acts. Experts also see domestic climate legislation as a key enabler for a more ambitious global agreement.

What is the Big Ask?

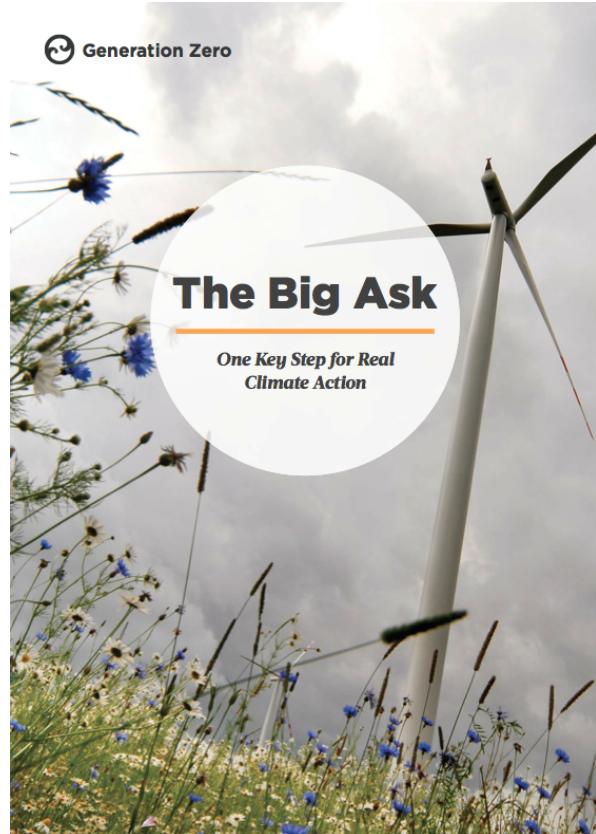
For New Zealand to implement a Climate Change Act that:

- Legislates a binding 2050 emissions reduction target of at least 50% below 1990 levels (the current Government target).
- Sets binding periodic ‘carbon budgets’ to ensure progress.
- Establishes an independent Climate Commission to advise the Government on carbon budgets and policies required to meet them, and holds the Government accountable.

The Government can then task the Climate Commission with reviewing New Zealand’s 2050 target and conducting a feasibility study on pathways for New Zealand to achieve 100% renewable energy (including transport, heat and industry) by 2050.

Who is Generation Zero?

Generation Zero is a non-partisan, nationwide group of young New Zealanders founded in 2011 to advance solutions to climate change and help put New Zealand on track towards a zero carbon future.



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