

OraTaiao underwhelmed by the Budget's support for climate or health

Simply going by the 2021 Budget, one wouldn't know our government has declared a climate emergency; rather it was another disappointment in a long string of underwhelming Budgets, said Dr Dermot Coffey, Co-convenor, OraTaiao: NZ Climate and Health Council.

While commending certain commitments, particularly the ringfencing of ETS revenue for climate action, the incorporation of a 'shadow carbon' price into the Budget for the first time, investment in rail and smaller amounts for public sector decarbonisation, in terms of mitigating and adapting to climate changes, OraTaiao was unimpressed.

"The commitments made are simply neither ambitious, nor proactive enough, nor equity driven enough for the systemic change needed," said Dr Coffey.

"Certainly we tautoko the double-edged initiatives like the Warmer Kiwi Homes Programme that support health while also reducing emissions, but we are disturbed by the lack of attention given the dual climate and health gains that can - and must - be achieved within the agricultural sector. And we searched unsuccessfully for a clear theme of equity - knowing unequivocally, Māori face the worst challenges ahead if climate isn't materially prioritised.

"Budgets are as much ethical statements as financial ones, and again we fail to see Government action matching their rhetoric.

"We challenge Government to challenge us; clearly signal expectations for decarbonisation across health, transport, agriculture – all sectors – rather than offering unsupported claims that 'all ministries are climate change ministries now.'

"Equip us - and expect us - to demonstrate leadership to the world. We'll struggle to do it without your wholehearted support," Dr Coffey said.

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