

Chapter 11:

Introduction: What could this mean for New Zealanders?

The climate change transition for Aotearoa will bring opportunities, benefits, challenges and costs. The way we transition will have both positive and negative impacts on different groups of society, regions, sectors of the economy and generations.

Aotearoa can transition in a way that considers the wellbeing of people, the land and the environment. This Part does not attempt to ‘sum up’ the positive and negative impacts of our transition, but instead addresses each potential impact in turn – looking at where impacts could be compounded and how they could be managed.

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11.1 Introduction

Understanding the impacts of the climate change transition requires understanding that all things are connected – the people, the land, the atmosphere, the oceans. The connectivity between all things – material and non-material – is central to the Te Ao Māori view, delineated through the foundational concept of whakapapa.

The concept of interconnectivity is also reflected in the carbon cycle and our place in it. In our economy, understanding the connections within our economic systems – our food production system, our energy production systems, and our transport system – and our global connections is essential to understanding how Aotearoa can transition to a thriving, climate-resilient and low emissions society.

The transition would bring a mix of opportunities, benefits, challenges and inevitable costs. The way Aotearoa transitions, and the policies put in place would have diverse impacts – both positive and negative – on different groups of society, regions, sectors of the economy, and generations.

Any such impacts must be compared to the counterfactual – in particular to the effects and costs of more severe droughts, sea level rise, storms from a lack of global action to reduce emissions. While Aotearoa acting alone to reduce emissions would not reduce these impacts, by playing its part as a responsible global citizen, Aotearoa will contribute to the global action necessary to reduce the severity of these impacts.

Research shows that people in general share intrinsic values that allow us to think productively about reducing emissions.¹ New Zealanders have a protective concern for the welfare of others and preserving our habitats. We value responsible, long-term-focused steps to manage the issues facing our environment. We understand our fate is intertwined with the fate of the earth as one interactive system. Finally, we are hopeful, due to our history of being resourceful, clever and thoughtful to solve problems and generate new ideas.

Aotearoa has the opportunity to transition in a way that considers the broader wellbeing of people, the land, and the environment – both now and in the future. Tikanga values that orientate around the perspective of tiakitanga – being a good guardian or steward – can help guide Aotearoa to achieve outcomes that consider our broader wellbeing:

- *Manaakitanga* – having a deep ethic of care towards people and the whenua (land), acknowledging their role in the ecosystem and how they could be impacted.

¹ (Berentson-Shaw & Elliott, 2019)

- *Tikanga* – ensuring the right decision makers are involved in the process, and the right decision-making process is implemented.
- *Whanaungatanga* – being mindful of the relationality between all things, our connections to each other and how we connect to our whenua.
- *Kotahitanga* – taking an inclusive approach and working collaboratively to access the best ideas and information while uplifting our collective efforts to transition to a thriving climate-resilient, low emissions Aotearoa.

Placing these values at the forefront of the transition would help to give greater priority to ensuring that the transition to a thriving climate-resilient low emissions society is inclusive, equitable, and improves the wellbeing of all New Zealanders now and in the future. Done well, Aotearoa can ensure that the benefits of acting on climate change are shared across society.

The economic stimulus planned to soften COVID-19 impacts in the coming months provides an opportunity to create jobs and address climate change. Making smart investment decisions in low emissions practices, technologies and infrastructure can create jobs and ensure people are better off, both now and in the future.²

The following chapters look at the potential positive and negative impacts that could occur as a result of the transition to a low emissions society. It considers how Aotearoa earns its way in the world, impacts on households and communities, impacts on the environment, and intergenerational equity.

The chapters do not attempt to ‘sum up’ the positive and negative impacts. It is not clear that a cost in one area – such as a cost to low income families – can be offset by a benefit in another – such as reduced dependency on fossil fuel imports. It is also difficult to assess the distribution of potential impacts across groups of society. Instead, we address each potential impact in turn, considering where impacts could be compounded on some groups of society and how any negative impacts can be managed.

² (Climate Change Commission, 2020)

11.2 References

Berentson-Shaw, J., & Elliott, M. (2019). *How to talk about climate change: A toolkit for encouraging collective action*. The Workshop, Oxfam New Zealand. https://www.oxfam.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/How-to-talk-about-Climate-Change_The-Workshop-Oxfam-NZ-2019.pdf

Climate Change Commission. (2020). *Letter to Hon James Shaw, Minister for Climate Change*. <https://ccc-production-media.s3.ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/public/Letter20to20Minister20-20Covid20Response20-20720April202020.pdf>