

BRIEFING TO INCOMING MINISTERS: CLIMATE CHANGE

This Government remains committed to achieving New Zealand's legislated climate change goals. Engineers have a vital role to play in this work. This briefing outlines the role of engineers in addressing climate change mitigation, adaptation, and transition, providing opportunities for collective action. Many New Zealanders recognise climate change as the single biggest global issue of our time bringing with it significant economic and social challenges and opportunities for New Zealand to respond in order to prosper.

Our position

Human-induced climate change is affecting New Zealand. The extreme weather events of 2023 are evidence of this. This will continue, and the negative impacts will increase.

The time for action is now. Engineers play a vital role in addressing climate change as many solutions require engineering, re-engineering or rethinking our engineered environment. Our members are committed to understanding the issues, developing collective solutions, working in partnership with Māori and government, and taking action to engineer better lives for all people within New Zealand.

We are committed to being proactive, providing leadership, collaboration and support for our members and stakeholders. This includes Ministers and we welcome opportunities to work together to address climate change, as well as live within wider planetary boundaries.¹

Our response to Government's work

We support New Zealand's focus on climate change and the increased prioritisation in legislation, policy and funding decisions, shaping the rules of the game that influence the engineering profession and organisations like Engineering New Zealand. We support the Climate Change Response (Zero Carbon) Amendment Act 2019 which sets out a target for New Zealand to reduce net emissions to zero by 2050.

Previously we have submitted on several relevant government proposals and support:

- a whole of life approach, focusing on embodied and operational carbon in the building and construction sector
- transforming New Zealand's energy sector and prioritising renewable energy generation and storage
- alignment with international best practice
- legislative changes and financing to enable the transition to a net zero economy by 2050
- transitioning in an equitable and inclusive way
- collaboration between local and central government, iwi, hapū and industry.

It is in our best interests to mitigate our impact on the climate and transition and adapt to the realities of climate change.

Next steps

Recognising the vital role of engineers in addressing climate change, we welcome an opportunity to discuss the following with Government:

- 1. Investment opportunities** – For New Zealand to reach its zero-carbon 2050 target, we need Government to invest in the right opportunities. Although many interventions (for example hydrogen) are politically attractive, engineers know that they are wishful thinking in the immediate future due to the realities of infrastructure constraints, funding and our geographical context. We need Government to invest strategically and pragmatically. Engineers understand the opportunities available and the trade-offs of these opportunities.
- 2. Adapting infrastructure** – Infrastructure must serve both today's society and tomorrow's world. Often, engineers are commissioned to design for today's world and address today's challenges. We are reactive, taking the lead of public sector commissioning bodies. Government has the power to change this by introducing standards that are future-focused while meeting today's needs. For example, we know where sea level rise will impact our communities. We know where the floodplains are that will buffer increased storm events. We have models to help plan better and build smarter. Quality outcomes are good for New Zealand and will strengthen our economic position into the future.
- 3. Strengthening regulation** – We build to regulation. Regulation sets the standard of our design, as clients most often drive solutions that meet, but do not exceed, minimum regulatory compliance requirements. Regulation leads industry and we support changes to the regulatory environment that will help us build better. An example of this is the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment's Building for Climate Change Programme.

1 Stockholm University. 2023. stockholmresilience.org/research/planetary-boundaries.html