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# Opportunities to support our transition to a climate-resilient future

Hon James Shaw, Minister for Climate Change writes about our current climate situation in Aotearoa New Zealand and what government action is being taken to tackle climate change.

I'm really pleased to contribute to this special environment-focused edition of *Philanthropy News*. It comes at a crucial juncture in our efforts to tackle climate change and the multiple environmental challenges we face here in Aotearoa New Zealand and at a planetary level.



Many of our rivers and lakes are no longer safe to swim in, we have lost 90% of our natural wetlands, and 4,000 of our native species are at risk or in danger of extinction. We are producing more waste than we should, with related emissions. Our greenhouse gas emissions have increased by 20% since 1990, when they should have been decreasing. Extreme weather events such as floods, droughts and wildfires are occurring more frequently and with greater intensity.

We have a huge challenge ahead of us to create the inclusive, climate-resilient, low emissions, circular economy<sup>1</sup> that Aotearoa New Zealand needs to flourish in future.

Grantmakers and philanthropists have already played a unique and critically important role in enabling communities and organisations to rise to these challenges, often in partnership with government. Your contributions make a tremendous difference.

## So, what has the Government done?

We came into government four years ago with a clear mandate to act on climate change, to clean up our waterways, tackle our waste problems and support our biodiversity to survive and flourish.

In August 2021, the Government released its waste reduction work programme to support the transition to a low carbon circular economy, and in October we launched public consultation on our waste strategy.

The \$1.2 billion Jobs for Nature programme is creating nature-based jobs, enabling a greener recovery for Aotearoa New Zealand following the economic impacts of Covid-19. Funding rounds have been heavily oversubscribed with applications, highlighting strong interest from environmental restoration projects seeking funding support. This is an example of an area where we'd like to work with the philanthropic sector to meet the demand, and build on the positive legacy that the Jobs for Nature programme is creating.

I know that the Ministry for the Environment is strengthening its relationship with Philanthropy New Zealand, Tōpūtanga Tuku Aroha o Aotearoa, and welcomes collaboration with funders.

Another example where government, the philanthropic and private sectors are working together is in implementing The Aotearoa Circle's Sustainable Finance Forum (SFF) 2030 roadmap for action, hosted by the recently established Toitū Tahua Centre for Sustainable Finance. The roadmap provides a pathway towards a financial system that is more climate-resilient and inclusive.

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*Hon James Shaw,  
Minister for Climate Change*

When it comes to climate change, we have passed the Zero Carbon Act and established the Climate Change Commission. We declared a Climate Emergency. We now factor climate change into government decision making across all sectors. We are introducing the clean car discount and legislation to require large financial organisations to report and act on their climate risk. We are decarbonising industry and the state sector by putting an end to coal boilers, just as we put an end to offshore oil and gas exploration.

We have invested in rail, electric vehicles, cycleways and public transport initiatives, to get more higher emitting vehicles off Aotearoa New Zealand’s roads. We have divested default KiwiSaver funds of fossil fuel investments, we launched the Green Investment Fund, and we are making changes to the Emissions Trading Scheme to strengthen its effect.

In all this work, we have a special responsibility to live up to the promise of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. It is great to see the increasing awareness among philanthropic funders on the importance of building and strengthening relationships with Māori. I want to acknowledge the work Philanthropy New Zealand, Tōpūtanga Tuku Aroha o Aotearoa is doing to build the capacity and capability of funders to engage and support Māori aspirations, in a mana-enhancing way.

### **We have much further to go, and we need to work together**

Despite all these and other significant efforts, we know that we still have a lot more to do as a country.

We are now seeking input and ideas to help shape our first Emissions Reduction Plan (submissions are open until November 24th, 2021, through the Ministry for the Environment website). When it is released next year, the Emissions Reduction Plan will mark the start of the next phase of the Government’s work to tackle the climate emergency.

The Plan will need to set out future policy and regulatory change, as well as actions that can be taken by businesses, towns and cities, and every community. It will also set out how we make the transition in an inclusive and equitable way.

Today’s rangatahi will inherit a world from us that will be profoundly altered by the choices we make in the next few years. We, as the Government, can’t do this alone – the philanthropic sector can play a huge role in supporting our country’s climate transition.

We would love to hear from you in our consultation on the Emissions Reduction Plan. What plans do you already have in place that will contribute to our emission reductions? Do you have new ideas of how we can go further? Is there particular support that you need from government to make it happen? These are just some of the questions that we’d love to hear from you on.

The frameworks we have put in place over the past four years should set a clear expectation for the future that no matter who is in government, meeting our emission reduction budgets will be a priority for decades to come. This certainty I hope will give you more clarity about the long-term investment and support you can most strategically provide to organisations and communities.

I thank you all for your significant investments in Aotearoa New Zealand’s future to date and look forward to continuing to work together for a clean, green future where everybody will have what they need to lead fulfilling, meaningful and prosperous lives.

<sup>1</sup> A Circular economy is based on three principles: design out waste and pollution, keep products and materials in use, regenerate natural systems.