

Electricity Sector Could Act to Reduce Carbon Pollution

The recent Fifth Assessment Report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is a sobering analysis of where the world is heading if we continue to burn fossil fuels and pollute the atmosphere with carbon dioxide.

Climate Change Minister Tim Groser believes New Zealand is doing its fair share, but Eric Pyle, CEO of the New Zealand Wind Energy Association suggests New Zealand could do much more than it is currently.

“Yes, we are a small country. Yes, NZ contributes a small proportion of emissions globally - but we must stop finding reasons not to act,” said Mr Pyle. “New Zealand’s effort to reduce carbon pollution has focussed on methane, which does not add CO₂ to the atmosphere, and has distracted us away from a real problem that we could do something about.”

The New Zealand Wind Energy Association believes the real problem is CO₂ pollution. As Professor Dave Frame, Director and Professor of Climate Change at Victoria University, will tell you, agricultural methane does not actually add carbon dioxide pollution to the atmosphere and there are two main sources of CO₂: electricity and transport.

It is in the electricity sector that quick and large reductions in carbon pollution can be made.

“There is an easy win at our fingertips. 15% of New Zealand’s CO₂ emissions come from the electricity sector and we could easily reduce the amount of carbon pollution from this sector,” said Mr Pyle.

But wasn’t New Zealand the envy of the world at 72% renewable electricity generation in 2012? Contrary to popular understanding, New Zealand’s level of renewable generation is actually decreasing – we were 80% renewable in 1990 and since then carbon pollution from the electricity sector has increased substantially – CO₂ levels from the electricity sector in 2012 were 84% higher than 1990 levels.

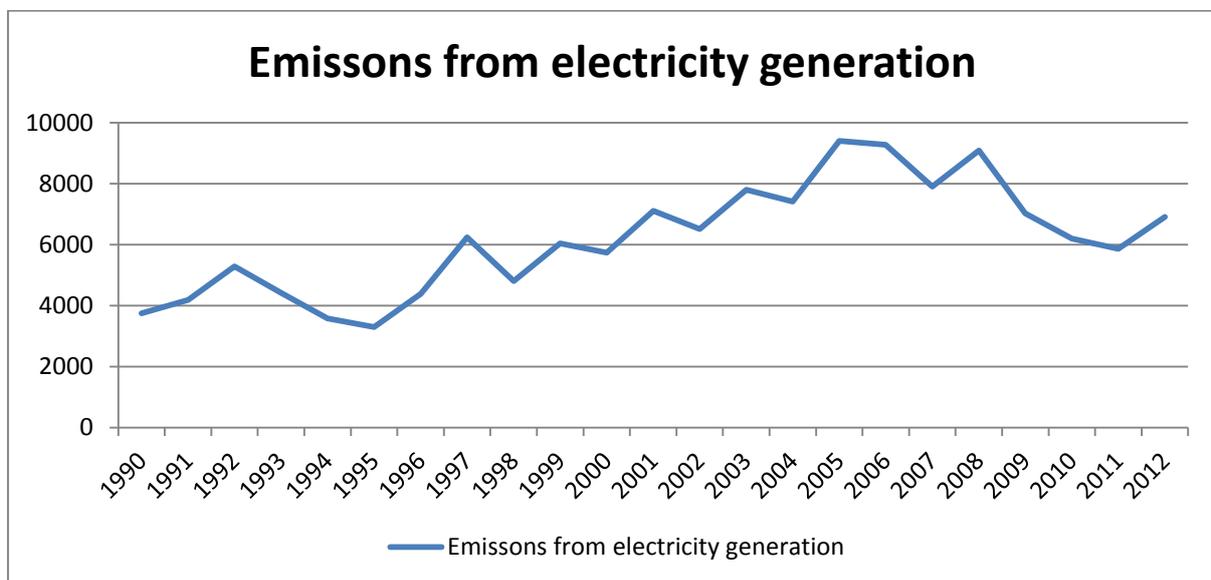
As Minister Groser stated in his media release welcoming the IPCC Report, New Zealand has a bipartisan target of 90% renewable-based electricity by 2025.

“We would welcome policy that supports this target and gives the industry a practical way forward,” said Mr Pyle. “With a shift in policy to better support renewable electricity generation at least four

million tonnes of carbon pollution could easily be eliminated – that’s the equivalent of reducing emissions from road transport by a third. The scale of reduction and cost of it would be a very hard ask in any other sector of the economy.”

New Zealand has more renewable energy ready to be built – more than 2.5 gigawatts of wind has been consented and there are consents for geothermal generation. Why are we resting on our perceived laurels and adding to the global carbon pollution problem?

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Graphed sourced from figures released by [MBIE](#)

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