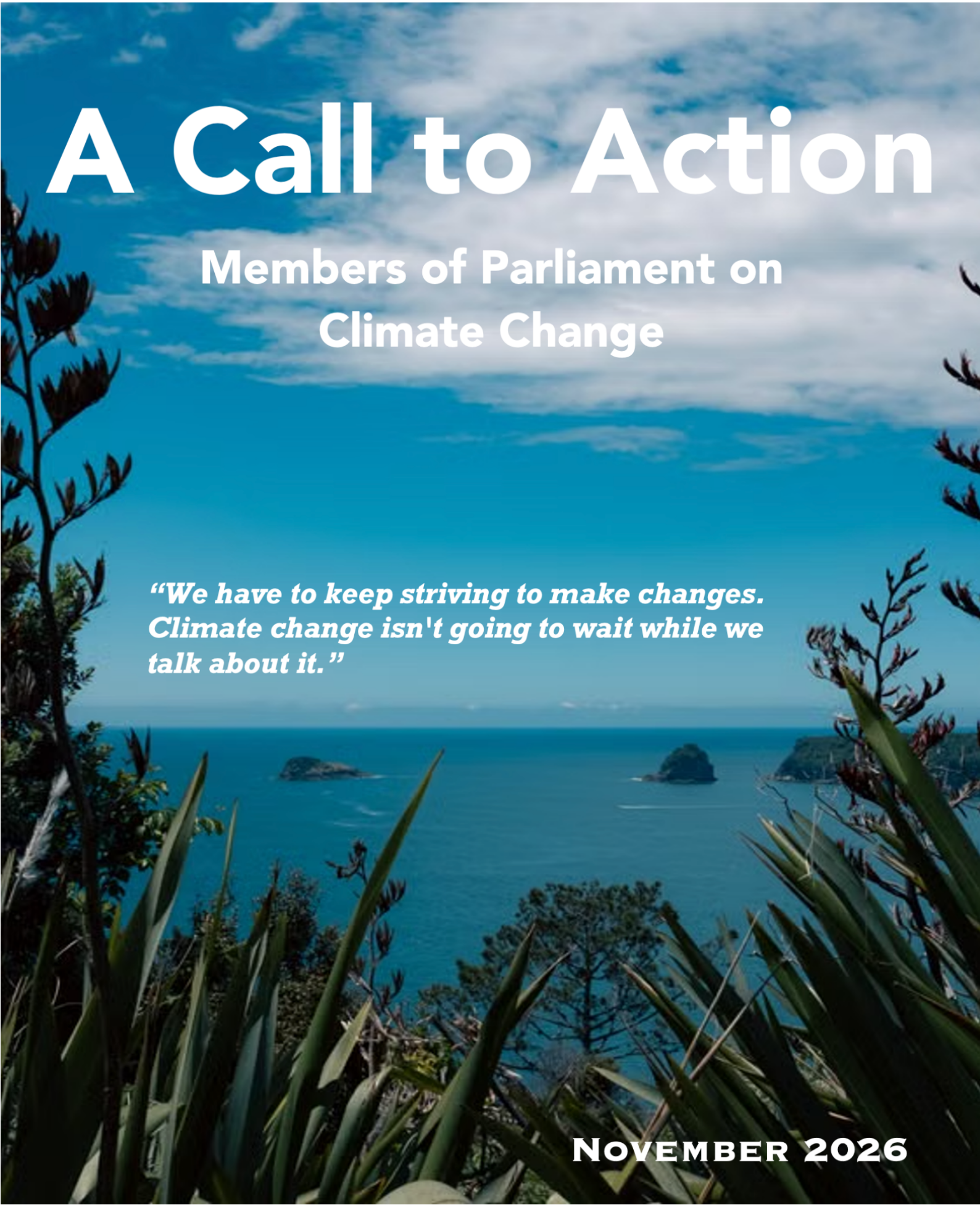
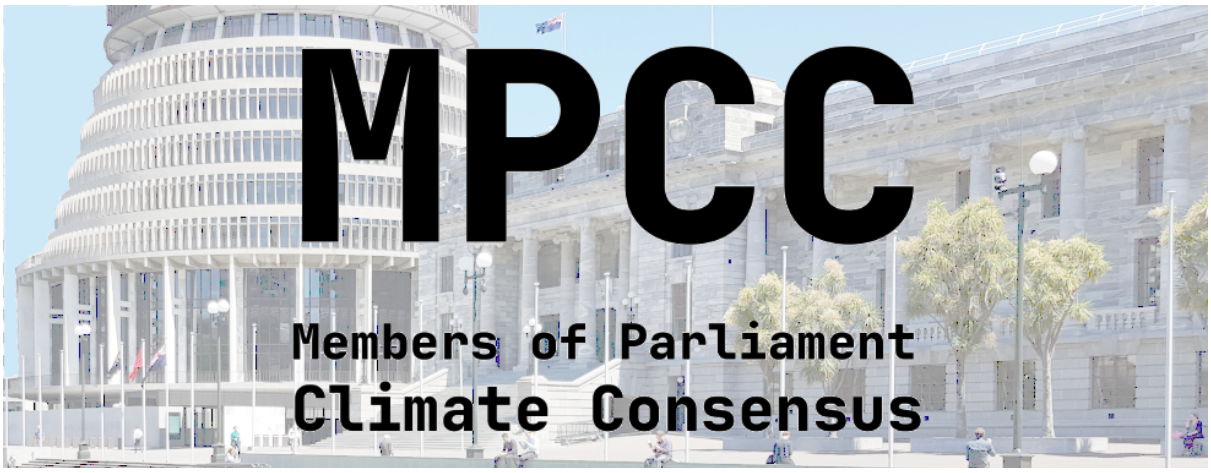


Shared concerns, themes and ideas of 74 individual MPs, Parliament number 54, sitting 2023-2026. A report by the Members of Parliament Climate Consensus Working Group.



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A Call to Action: Members of Parliament on Climate Change
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by MPCC: Members of Parliament Climate Consensus Working Group and Nuran Cinlar

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AI was used for some analysis in the Appendix. It is not used in the rest of the report.

Foreword: A Call to Action

When it comes to natural resources endowed by our planet, Aotearoa New Zealand is fortunate.

Without any effort, we have been endowed with marvellous plant, bird and marine life, water, rain, sun, wind, geothermal energy and waves.

New Zealand's geo-physical endowment places us in a strong position to progress economic development as well as set a fast pace for helping to protect our planet.

Recent weather events, floods and cyclones, have been strong indicators of the fury of the climate. We need an action plan now based on a long-term vision of how the economy can benefit from its physical endowments to shape how to best adapt to climate change.



As our meetings with MPs in New Zealand's 2023 to 2026 Parliament found, the focus to date has been on crisis management and mitigation of extreme climate events. This has had a profound impact on our fiscal position, making it harder to balance government, household, council, and iwi budgets. Governing without a clear vision for climate change means continually paying out without gaining anything in return.

There is hope. Our meetings with MPs found that nearly all of them want to do something to improve New Zealand's approach to the climate. There is knowledge of the advantages of our endowment. For these to be harvested, we need to take a page out of the book of the UN's Elders and enable long-view leadership with a commitment to addressing climate change with a present and future time horizon.

We have a massive opportunity, supported by our hydro system and other renewable energy resources. There are opportunities for our farmers to build resilience and improve their viability by becoming premium price makers instead of commodity producers. There are opportunities to build new industries here to provide increased employment opportunities across our population.

The majority of MPs in the 54th Parliament wanted to do something more to address climate change. With the 2026 Election of our 55th Parliament, it's time for real action. The three ingredients for that are: (1) leadership with a future vision; (2) cross-party agreement on the pathway ahead and (3) the development of a process that can support cross-party collaborative climate change policy regardless of our 3-year election cycles.

Gill Greer & Suzanne Snively - Co-convenors
Members of Parliament Climate Consensus Working Group Volunteers

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Executive Summary

Members of New Zealand's Parliament share a concern, across political parties, about climate change and the urgent steps that need to be taken by the government to address it.

This report brings together the views of 74 Members of Parliament (MPs) from across the political spectrum, whom we met individually, and in confidence, between October 2025 and September 2026. The purpose of these meetings was to listen to individual Parliamentarians' responses to a short set of questions about climate change. Our aim was to learn MPs' individual perspectives, out of the spotlight. We hoped to identify concerns, ideas and assumptions, within and across party boundaries.

Key findings from these meetings show that there is considerably more shared ground among MPs than their public political debate suggests.

At the broadest level, almost all the MPs whom we met accepted that climate change is real, that New Zealand needs a coherent response, and that greater cross-party co-operation would be invaluable. We identified five main themes from these meetings.

The need to balance policy priorities

A central shared theme was the need for balance. MPs repeatedly described climate policy as requiring complex choices between legitimate objectives rather than simply between action and inaction.

These legitimate objectives included maintaining agricultural productivity and export competitiveness while protecting our environmental reputation; investing in resilience and/or adaptation while maintaining fiscal discipline; acting for the long term while responding to immediate financial pressures on households; and reducing emissions without undermining public support by imposing burdensome costs. Differences between MPs were often about where the balance should lie, rather than which objective should be pursued and which should be discarded.

Developing and maintaining long-term policy in a competitive political environment

A second recurring theme was the difficulty of making and sustaining long-term policy in New Zealand's competitive political environment.

MPs from the five participating political parties – National, ACT, NZ First, Labour and Greens (Te Pāti Māori agreed to meet but was unable to schedule for it) – expressed frustration with policy reversals, with the incentives for short-termism created by three-year electoral cycles, and the difficulty parties face in co-operating when co-operation might expose them politically or be seen as conflicting with political party discipline.

Parliamentarians from the regions most affected by recent harsh storms and flooding often described climate change in practical rather than wide-ranging terms. These MPs felt pressure to respond to local challenges and develop community-led responses to specific events or risks. They felt that these community-based interventions were generally supported by their electorates.

Other MPs considered climate change a national concern requiring a national response. A national approach can deliver economies of scale and greater focus on preventing harm rather than responding after it has happened. An MP whose electorate was recently flooded may want to build

stop banks, while a Minister focussed at the national level may consider wider solutions like plans and funding for managed retreat.

The recurring post-election political reversals of climate change policy priorities, both regional and national, contribute to uncertainty.

Widespread concern about "ideology" and polarisation

MPs across the political spectrum were wary of working with people they regarded as committed to predetermined ideology. They wanted greater room for evidence, practical experience and for colleagues to modify their previous views as circumstances change. They were pessimistic about being able to work in this way with colleagues whom they viewed as ideologues. No MPs described themselves as ideologues.

Some MPs believed the ideology of climate change activists included a strategy to fuel undue public panic in order to spur climate action. Others used the term "ideology" to critique what they saw as some parliamentary colleagues' collective commitment to a free-market economy based on extracting natural resources for private gain.

MPs who took an orthodox economic approach saw markets, businesses, insurers, consumers and technological innovation as the principal mechanisms for achieving constructive responses to climate issues. Others, by contrast, viewed current economic approaches as constraints that limit the scale of policy change to a lower level than the issue requires.

What is the scale of the issue and how urgently should we act?

The strongest differences between MPs were about the appropriate level of urgency and scale of action needed to address climate change in New Zealand.

Some MPs regarded rapid, widespread action as necessary. Others were concerned that poorly designed or premature interventions could impose substantial costs for little benefit. Many of the differences in MPs' views are underpinned by variability about what actions to take, how widely and how soon to act, and how much resource to commit.

The importance of building social licence

Social licence emerged as another important theme. MPs differed about the level of existing public support for stronger climate action. They recognised that effective and durable policy depends upon people understanding the policy's purpose, trusting that the costs are reasonable, and believing that the burdens are distributed fairly.

MPs frequently discussed communication, education, and credible evidence as essential conditions for policy agreement and action.

Other topics the MPs raised

Some MPs identified mātauranga Māori as a source of knowledge and iwi as important partners. The existing role of marae as community centres during emergencies was cited as a practical example of already-established resilience.

A range of MPs commented on the effects of climate change on younger New Zealanders. In addition, several identified issues that they consider are stalling New Zealand's climate response: a lack of leadership, lobbying by commercial interests, uncertainty about how to address rural and agricultural concerns, and lack of clarity about the insurance industry's climate strategy. They are

also concerned how our slow progress on climate action will affect our reputation, impacting trade and foreign relations.

Conclusions

The MPs who found time to meet us differ substantially about what actions the Government should take and how quickly it should act. Nevertheless, there is meaningful common ground about the problem, the constraints and the difficulties of making lasting decisions.

Overall, the MPs' views suggest that the principal opportunity for greater cross-party engagement lies in letting go of the desire for complete agreement, and in building on the existing, more modest shared foundation.

Based on comments from our meetings, this foundation for effective cross-party action consists of:

- acceptance that climate change presents long-term risks and opportunities
- concern for future generations
- the need for stronger resilience and adaptation
- the importance of remaining economically sound both as a government and as a nation
- a desire for stronger public engagement and political commitment.

> ***We have to keep striving to make changes. Climate change isn't going to wait while we talk about it.***
> (An MP's statement, paraphrased)

Introduction

In mid-2025 a new term began to appear in media stories about climate policy: “climate hushing.” It describes the deliberate avoidance of mentioning or discussing climate change, usually out of concern that the topic alienates too many people. According to the pundits, there are politicians, media outlets and business leaders around the world who increasingly avoid the topic.[1]

In New Zealand, the recent initial exclusion of the term ”climate change” from the proposed new schools’ curriculum in science and social science (now amended after public disapproval) is an example. Hushing happens when people with authority deem the topic of climate change too controversial, or consider people’s views likely to become too strident. In schools, people defending the exclusion claimed that the phrase “climate change” could distract students from the topic they were meant to be learning.

“Climate hushing” is neither denial nor complacency. It does not suggest climate change is a hoax or the result of misunderstood evidence. It does not assume that we can eliminate the phrase “climate change” because we think everyone who is going to acknowledge the phenomenon has already done so. Climate hushing is more a matter of mana; it is grounded in the belief that speaking about climate change can damage one’s credibility and should, therefore, be avoided.

The problem is that when the topic is ”hushed”, it becomes even more difficult for our political leaders to address it, and for us, as citizens, to encourage climate action and constructive discussion.

Forming a Climate Consensus project group

Dismayed by what seemed to be increasing silence here in Aotearoa New Zealand about climate change, a group of New Zealanders met to consider how to stimulate real conversations among our political leaders on climate-based risks and strategies for mitigating those risks.

Climate change and adaptation are now major issues. They deserve serious attention and New Zealand must develop its own response, rather than simply follow the decisions of superpowers or international entities. Given our size, location, infrastructure and economy, it is also unlikely that approaches developed by other countries to address their own climate concerns would all be fully applicable here.

And so we formed the *Members of Parliament Climate Consensus* (MPCC) project.

The MPCC project group wants to end the hushing of climate change among Members of Parliament, so that the issues can be raised, discussed in meaningful, good faith conversations, and effectively addressed.

Our group is diverse, and we share enough knowledge about our New Zealand politicians to know that there is considerable interest and insight about climate change among them. We also thought it likely that MPs from across the political spectrum would agree on more than they expected.

We decided to ask them about their views, and listen to their answers. This report describes the shared themes and concerns that we heard. Our hope is that by identifying common themes we can help MPs re-engage with each other, and begin to develop an enduring cross-party, long-term

[1] See for example Searchlight Institute, “The First Rule About Solving Climate Change: Don’t Say Climate Change,” 22 September 2025, https://www.searchlightinstitute.org/research/the-first-rule-about-solving-climate-change/ accessed 21 August 2026. On businesses, see The Economist, “The remarkable rise of ‘greenhushing’,” 29 June 2025, https://www.economist.com/business/2025/07/29/the-remarkable-rise-of-greenhushing accessed 21 August 2026.

strategy and action plan for New Zealand's climate response. A number of contentious issues such as superannuation and marriage equality have been very effectively addressed through similar cross-party engagement in the past. The same strategy could now re-energise New Zealand's response to climate change.

We identified four aims:

1. We are here to listen to MPs.
2. We have a goal of meeting as many as possible of the 122 MPs to hear their views.[2]
3. We aim to collate common themes.
4. By showing how themes and views across Parliament align, we hope to provide increased common ground for agreement and action.

What we did

We approached all 122 MPs, some multiple times, for meetings. We met individually with those who agreed and could find time. Various members of our group interviewed 74 of the 122 MPs. The MPs we met belonged to five political parties: National, ACT, New Zealand First, Labour, and the Green Party.[3] We began these meetings in October 2025 and completed the last ones for this report in September 2026.

The individual MP meetings each lasted between 20 and 40 minutes and were kept small, usually including the MP and two members of our group. The appendix to this report assesses additional data on the group of MPs we interviewed.

We did not lobby.

We did not aim to change anyone's priorities or understanding. We committed as a group to the principle that this project is not about our views; it is about the personal views of New Zealand MPs.

We went to listen. We asked each MP three questions:

1. What are your general thoughts and understandings about climate change?

2. What are the challenges that you identify with climate change or that are linked to climate change?

3. What, if anything, would you like to do, related to climate change, either in your role as MP or personally, and what difficulties do you perceive in achieving this?

MPs' statements were off the record so that they could speak freely and frankly as individuals. For this reason, we took notes but did not make visual or audio recordings of the discussions. We committed not to attribute statements to specific MPs or parties in our report. Because of this, MP statements in this report are anonymised (not attributed to a named person) and paraphrased, not verbatim quotes, although we did try to replicate MPs' wording on their main points when possible.

These paraphrases are shown in ***bold italics*** in this report.

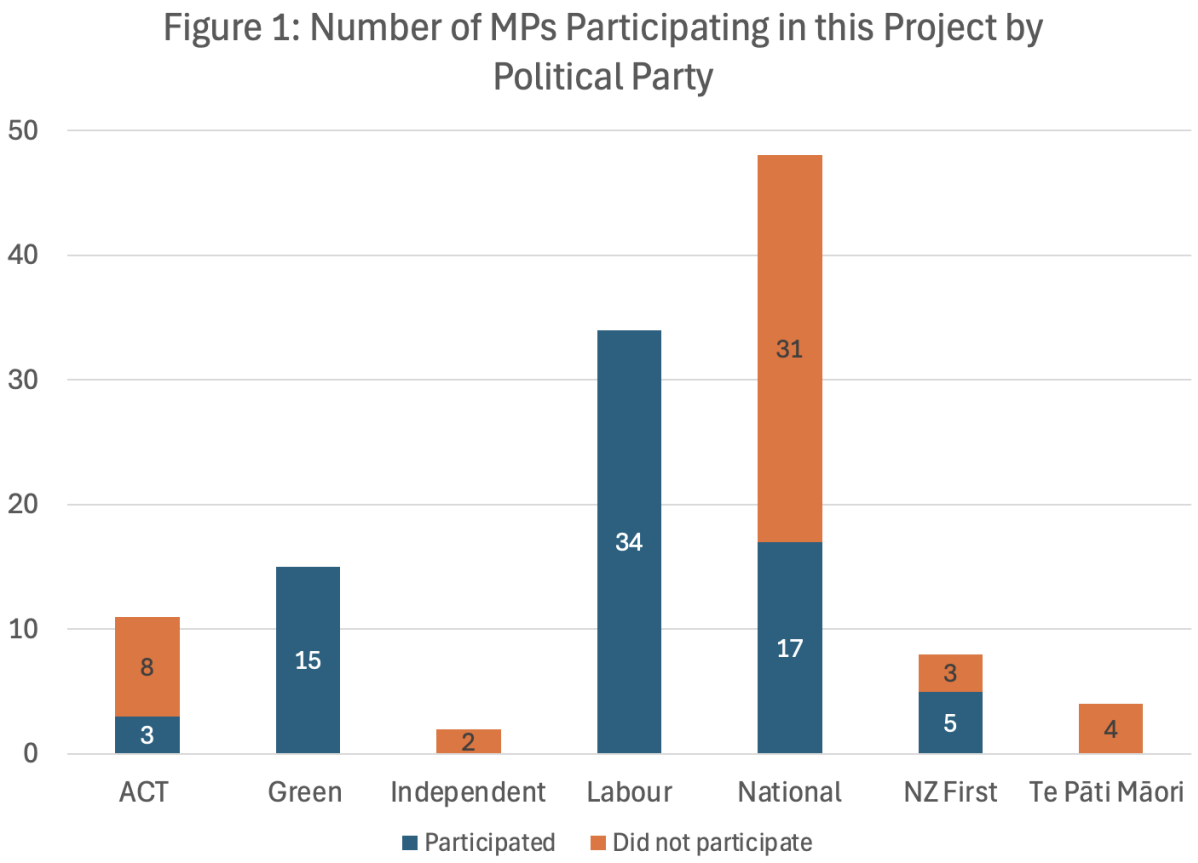
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[2] The 54th Parliament had 123 MPs at the start of the term. By the end of the term this had changed to 122. Because our project took place during the later part of the term, we aimed to meet 122 MPs. We use this figure in our calculations.

[3] We had appointments with several members of Te Pāti Māori, but these were repeatedly rescheduled due to Party matters, and we were unable to meet before finalising this report.

MPs' participation in the project

Participation rates by political party were uneven, as shown in Figure 1 below. National Party MPs, for example, held 39% of seats in the 54th Parliament, but made up only 23% of the pool of MPs who were interviewed. By contrast, Green MPs formed 12% of Parliament and made up 20% of participating MPs. This resulted in a pool of participants that was approximately two thirds MPs outside Government and only one third MPs in the coalition Government. We tried to, and would have liked to meet with all sitting MPs.



The uneven participation is even more striking when considering the percentage of each party's MPs who met with us (Figure 2). Over 89% of MPs who were outside the coalition Government met with us, including 100% of Labour and Green MPs.

MPs' responses to our requests for meetings were initially fewer than expected. The response rate improved after our first meetings, when MPs who had attended meetings with us were able to encourage – and perhaps reassure – their colleagues. We were also fortunate to have help from MPs' Executive Assistants and Party whips who encouraged and facilitated more meetings.

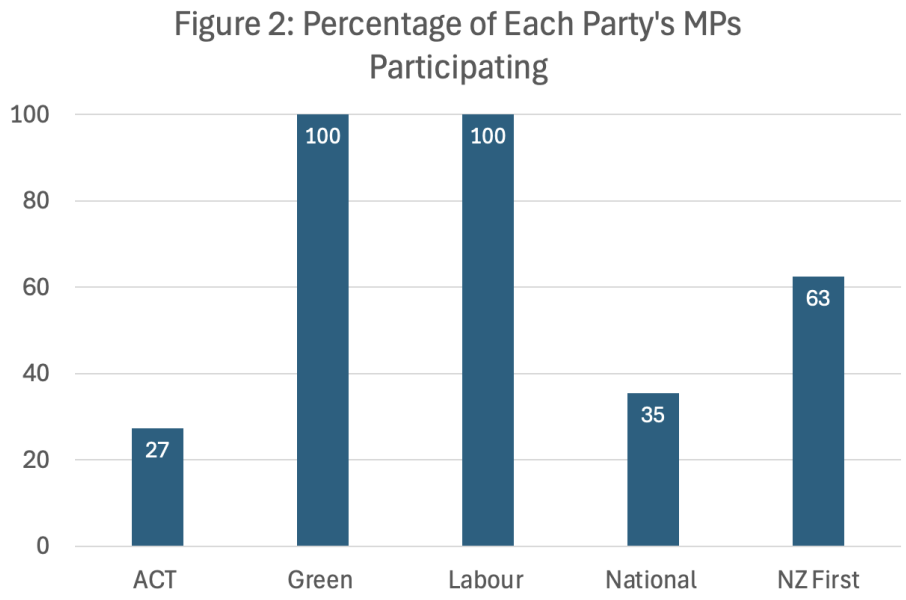


Figure 3: Count of MPs Participating by Political Party

Party	Interviewed	Total in Parliament
National	17	48
Labour	34	34
Greens	15	15
ACT	3	11
NZ First	5	8
Te Pāti Māori	0	4
Independent	0	2
TOTAL	74	122

In our analysis we gave particular consideration to the views of MPs in the coalition parties so that their lower participation rate in this project did not skew our understanding. We also reviewed public statements by non-participating MPs to get a general sense of their views. We have tried to ensure this report reflects adequately the views across all participating parties.

The elephant in the room was recent changes to climate legislation

When we met MPs for this project, the dismantling of prior climate legislation was well under way.[4] Much of that climate legislation had passed in the previous government, some of it with strong

[4] The Government eliminated or dramatically scaled back the Clean Car Discount, the ban on oil and gas exploration, the Government Investment in Decarbonising Industry (GIDI), and the targets for reducing emissions. See Johnson, Kirsty. "How Jacinda Ardern's 'groundbreaking' climate law has become 'a shell'," Radio New Zealand, 19 August 2025, https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/politics/570336/how-jacinda-ardern-s-groundbreaking-climate-law-has-become-a-shell . See also Climate Action Tracker, "New Zealand: three years of systematic policy rollbacks," October 2026, https://climateactiontracker.org/documents/1444/CAT_2026-10-28_Briefing_NewZealandRollbacks.pdf and Marc Daalder, "Gutting of Zero Carbon Act crashes bipartisan climate consensus," Newsroom, 06 November 2025, https://newsroom.co.nz/2025/11/06/gutting-of-zero-carbon-act-crashes-bipartisan-climate-consensus/

cross-party support. The signature climate legislation, the Zero Carbon Act 2019, had passed by a vote of 119 to one. At the time it was passed, it was lauded internationally as a world-first climate framework and a triumph of cross-party, nonpartisan work.[5]

But by 2025 times had changed. A global pandemic, widespread inflation, and rejection of climate change evidence by the new US administration all drove climate change lower on the list of many MPs' priorities. The 2023-26 Government changed the climate strategy significantly, setting more mild targets and eliminating much of the public consultation the 2019 Act had required be undertaken before the Act was changed. The Government also eliminated or dramatically scaled back other climate legislation they inherited, including the Clean Car Discount, the ban on oil and gas exploration, and the Government Investment in Decarbonising Industry (GIDI).

The coalition government understood that many of their climate-related policy changes were unpopular in some quarters, but they seemed primarily motivated to protect New Zealand industries at a time when many businesses were struggling. If that meant retreating on climate action in order to reduce the compliance burden on businesses, they chose to do so. In 2025 the Government changed the Zero Carbon Act unilaterally.

New Zealand's system of government makes possible abrupt legislative changes, and such changes seem to have become more prevalent over time. A three-year term leaves little time to develop and implement new policies before the media and the public begin assessing a new Government's achievements. A Government may come to power with a set of campaign promises to fulfil and a set of their predecessors' actions they had criticised. Undoing the previous Government's work can be a quick way to be seen to be delivering on voters' wishes.

By dismantling major cross-party climate legislation without consultation, though, and so quickly disregarding what was intended as a long-term climate strategy, the coalition Government fuelled uncertainty among MPs from all parties. It made some MPs cautious in their meetings with us, and emboldened others who viewed the reduced climate legislation as a gap that they could work to fill. Several MPs from a range of parties made it subtly clear that their support for their party did not mean they agreed with everything their party wanted to do on climate change.

The weakening of New Zealand's climate legislation provided an important context for MPs' statements to us. This MPCC project invited them to think through their policy positions on climate change, their thoughts on the politics of making progress, and what actions they think the next Government should consider taking. It also invited them not to remain hushed on these topics.

> ***We should not be ripping up the agreements that had been agreed to across the House.***
>
> ***The challenge is the Coalition Government and how the Executive is making the decisions. Government MPs and National Party MPs are frustrated about the government's not maintaining climate as a fundamental issue.***

[5] "Ardern says New Zealand on 'right side of history' as MPs pass zero-carbon bill" *The Guardian* 7 November 2019. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/nov/07/ardern-says-new-zealand-on-right-side-of-history-as-mps-pass-zero-carbon-bill



Photo by Diego Silveira, via Pexels

Findings: Consensus views

We found three sorts of consensus among MPs. The first, noted below, are facts, goals, and behaviours that almost all of the MPs we met endorse.

MPs largely agreed that:

- Climate change is real and is induced by humans
- We must develop a coherent response
- We need a cross-party approach
- We should follow the science
- We need to develop our crisis response capability so we are better prepared for floods, slips, heat waves, storms and other climate events
- Renewables and electrification (less use of fossil fuels) will be a major focus
- Action on climate change is especially important to the next generations
- We need to be confident of public support for making changes
- Some form of an Emissions Trading Scheme will probably be part of the response.

The second consensus was on the key question that Parliament has to address before significant action on climate issues can be undertaken. That is the question of whether climate mitigation is the most important issue New Zealand must address. The next page explores this point.

A third sort of consensus was the recurrent themes that MPs raised. Identifying those common themes was our focus when we met with MPs. The themes are discussed in the next section of this report.

Central question: Is mitigation still the key goal?

Mitigation – reducing or eliminating further climate change, usually by reducing emissions – is a topic which clearly divides MPs. They were agreed, however, in identifying mitigation as the central issue shaping their views.

Mitigation was sometimes dismissed as unnecessary due to lingering doubts about climate science and what efforts would be effective. Some MPs felt that mitigation is not New Zealand's responsibility as they consider global warming a problem created by large countries. Some claimed it is too late to address mitigation. Some argued our country is too small for our climate mitigation efforts to have any significant effect on the global problem. Altogether, these MPs expressed concern that mitigation could be unnecessary, unfair to New Zealand, or ineffective.

> ***Unfortunately, there is very little that NZ can do to have an impact on the global picture.***
>
> ***I've given up on trying to prevent climate change and think that we should be focusing on adaptation.***
>
> ***We are past the point of mitigation and for many communities, we will be making hard choices on what is worthy of trying to fix.***

Other MPs were adamant that mitigation must be central to a New Zealand climate strategy. They felt that focusing only on climate resilience and adaptation would mean responding to the symptoms of the problem instead of the cause. In the long term, in their view, addressing only the symptoms is both expensive and ineffective.

> ***Mitigation is essential. NZ must get gross emissions down.***
>
> ***Get the energy piece right and everything flows from that.***
>
> ***We can't adapt ourselves out of it. All countries need to reduce emissions.***

We encountered another set of MPs who sit between these two uncompromising positions on mitigation. These MPs focused on the importance of transitioning to renewable energy sources without linking this to mitigation. Their aim could be to make energy more affordable, to reduce vulnerability to international disruptions of the fossil fuel supply chain, or to respond to shifts in market demand. The result is that many more MPs would accept climate mitigation via reducing the use of fossil fuels than is apparent from what they have to say about climate change.

Avoiding the question of what stance New Zealand should take on mitigation is possible, at least temporarily, but it leaves this key issue unaddressed. Avoidance would also invite continued tension among MPs who must make decisions every year about responding to the latest climate events, and decisions every few years about potential deviations from the climate strategy of a previous Government. Agreeing on short-term goals like renewable energy does not remove the need to set long-term goals on this issue. Industries and communities cannot plan or invest strategically without knowing what central government is committed to doing about mitigating as well as adapting to climate change.

Consistent themes

Beyond the areas of general agreement, MPs' views differed considerably, yet some consistent themes were evident. These five themes are addressed by nearly all interviewed MPs are:

Balancing policy priorities

MPs told us that New Zealand has to balance competing priorities such as keeping the agricultural sector productive and profitable while also maintaining our "clean, green" reputation so our international markets continue to value our products; or making key adaptations to climate change like building better infrastructure, while keeping government debt in check. MPs variously referred to the need for 'balance' as a challenge, a barrier to progress, a necessity, and an enabler. While MPs mostly referred to the concept rather than the word, their concern about balance permeated the interviews. Balancing competing priorities is always a central task for Parliament, yet doing so in relation to climate change has proved very difficult.

> ***We don't seem to be able to find a meaningful pathway to reconcile different views, instead there's a sense of fragility, people are discouraged, unhappy and concerned about the quality of life.***

> ***You can't be green when you're in the red.***

Working in a competitive political context

MPs, as expected, tended to frame climate change as a political problem. Public trust, business confidence, international relations, and regulatory settings could all be affected by Parliamentary action responding to climate change. Understanding and negotiating how the balance of political power would be affected by Government's climate actions was central to these discussions. Two aspects of this theme came through particularly clearly:

> Winners and losers

In an era where politics can seem to be about convincing voters that your opponents are disastrous, it is difficult for parties to co-operate on solutions to important problems. There is a "prisoner's dilemma" [6] aspect to this: if everyone cooperates and honours an agreement to stick to a single strategy, everyone will benefit; however, if anyone defects from the agreement, they may well gain first-mover political advantage, claiming a willingness to hold out for better solutions than their rivals.

Several MPs noted that governing for the benefit of all, that is for broad public good, has become increasingly rare. This has made it difficult for New Zealand to implement long-term strategies for government action.

> ***NZ makes little long-lasting, non-partisan or cross-party legislation for core public good. Generally governments flip-flop [between general elections]. This is not helpful for addressing climate mitigation or adaptation.***

> ***Is tackling climate change today too great a political risk for a political party or government?***

[6] In game theory, the prisoner's dilemma describes a situation when two parties can either cooperate for mutual benefit or not cooperate in order for each to try to protect themselves at the expense of the other. The classic situation is a pair of thieves taken to separate interrogation rooms by the police. Each is told that if they implicate the other, they'll go free, unless the other guy takes the deal first. If neither talks, they both go free. Dilemma: stay silent and hope the other thief doesn't talk, or take the deal?

> Regional vs national issues

Electorate MPs and those who maintain close ties with local communities often focus on local and community-based actions, expecting that over time, locally-specific actions will add up to protections for virtually all New Zealanders. They may view "one size fits all" initiatives from central government as wasteful and often ineffective. Politically, they prefer responding to climate problems once the problems have clearly manifested. Only at that point can they justify spending resources on climate issues.

> ***Local leadership was and is needed.***

By contrast, MPs who take a more national view tend to think about top-down approaches to climate change. They want to devise solutions that will do good for all New Zealanders, and they trust that smaller communities will see their share of benefit from those solutions. Many of these top-down MPs emphasize the value of preventing further climate damage.

> ***Adaptation costs less than recovery.***

MPs who approach climate change as an issue to be addressed with all-of-country policies often seem to base their climate views primarily on readings, news reports, and their discussions with knowledgeable people. They spoke about the evidence, the science, the potential to do more harm than good if policies were not sufficiently considered, and the potential misuse of the climate issue to gain political advantage. They were not clustered in either the coalition or the out-of-government parties.

> ***We don't know enough about the technical aspects of climate change to make good decisions about climate change policy settings.***

> ***We need to find and point to the science, for example from the IPCC, such as their 2019 Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate.***

Many of the more locally focused MPs we met had views on climate response that seemed shaped more by the experiences and needs of their local communities than by experts' pronouncements. Some were more comfortable relying on personal anecdotes than contested science. These MPs spoke about encountering constituents who are hungry for climate action and want their local MPs to deliver, or constituents who worry about the disruptions that government-initiated climate action would probably cause them. We saw this from MPs across the political spectrum. This was particularly the case for MPs from areas that have experienced unusually strong storms, flooding or other damaging weather events, and those where farming is concentrated.

> ***[Communities in my electorate] are very concerned about impacts and severe weather changes. Loss of long-standing homes and protracted insurance settlements have created heightened sensitivity to physical risk and displacement.***

> ***Advocacy on insurance and [managed] retreat can attract backlash if premiums rise or relocation becomes necessary, placing constituency MPs in the middle of community expectations and commercial realities.***

“Ideology” and polarisation

Ideology, as the term is used by the MPs we met, is a set of beliefs and assumptions that is held with such rigidity that it determines how evidence is interpreted. As implied by the MPs, an ideologue favours conclusions consistent with their beliefs, and resists revising their beliefs when confronted with contrary evidence or practical experience.

Ideology is a label that tends to be applied to other people's assumptions. One's own assumptions are presented as pragmatism, common sense, economics, evidence or simply reality. On the positive side, the term generally recognizes that an ideologue’s ideas are internally consistent and grounded in some evidence. However, ideology can also create paralysing polarisation.

As a theme, ideology featured in the interviews in two main ways:

> Inflexibility

According to many MPs, the topic of climate change has become an ideological battleground, which can lead to knee-jerk reactions rather than thoughtful responses when issues arise. This framing of others’ views as ideological, and the concern that this results in unconstructive stubbornness, featured in interviews across the political spectrum.

> ***I have an aversion to the term 'climate change' - it's laden with ideology and a barrier to finding common ground.***

> Market economics as solution or constraint

Across party lines, MPs' discussions of climate policy reflected the influence of an established economic policy framework in New Zealand that emphasises open markets, international trade and market-based mechanisms. For many MPs, but not all, this framework provided the context within which climate responses were considered, rather than climate change itself being the subject of debate. The goal of these MPs was to maintain optimal market economic policy settings, with climate change as the latest challenge. MPs nevertheless differed considerably in their assessments of whether existing economic arrangements facilitated or constrained effective climate action.

Some MPs emphasised that markets and private sector decision-making had a central role in responding to climate change. They pointed to mechanisms such as insurance premiums that reflect climate-related risks, regulatory changes that could accelerate green innovation in the private sector, and consumer demand for climate-friendly products. From this perspective, the pace and direction of New Zealand’s climate response would be shaped by international trading partners, agricultural sector leaders and major companies such as Fonterra, whose commercial decisions and responses to changing market conditions could help drive adaptation. Some MPs highlighted private sector initiatives already under way as evidence of this approach in practice.

> ***Fonterra has very ambitious methane reduction targets which are stronger than the government's because of their international reputation and trade.***

Other MPs suggested New Zealand’s established economic policy settings are a barrier to addressing climate change. They pointed to the emphasis on competition and the economic importance of resource-based extractive industries such as forestry, agriculture, fishing and mining. They viewed these economic priorities as factors that could constrain or complicate climate responses. Some placed these priorities in a longer historical context, identifying links between colonisation, the private ownership and commercial use of natural resources, and patterns of never-ending resource

extraction as causes of climate change. From this perspective, effective climate action could require reconsideration of some of the economic assumptions and institutional arrangements within which all policy is currently developed.

> ***The difficulty is that [a truly effective climate change response] requires political parties and their individual MPs to abandon their long-term ideology that a relatively unregulated capitalist economy is the best and only way to do things.***
>
> ***I'm worried about how climate change is often reduced to international obligations and treaties. Yet we are being sold a high emissions economy.***

The scale and urgency of New Zealand's response to climate change

There is considerable agreement among MPs that addressing climate issues is important, but wide disagreement on how urgently to act and how much resource to commit. MPs acknowledged that other pressing issues such as the cost of living, unemployment, government borrowing, housing, health, superannuation, and infrastructure also need attention.

Most MPs are unsure whether addressing climate change with significant action right away is wise. Some worry that only immediate action will have a chance of sparing us considerable damage. Others are concerned about satisfying voters in the next election. With the three-year election cycle, they feel that voters will want to see actions that have more immediate results than can be delivered by long-term investment in climate adaptation. There are also MPs who advocate a slower pace because we cannot afford to spend time and money on ineffective climate action. Like the parable about the tortoise and the hare, they consider a slow and steady pace is likely to be more effective and efficient.

> ***I have every confidence that the shift away from fossil fuels has begun and will continue but not in one generation. Attempts to do it in one generation will impede the shift.***
>
> ***The word "crisis" should mean urgency, but there isn't a sense of urgency about climate change. Humans aren't well equipped to deal with long-term problems – we're better at addressing what's immediately in front of us and find it hard to consider the future beyond say 5-7 years ahead. So, we're inclined to kick the can down the road, thinking "It's a real problem but not one I have to deal with today".***
>
> ***There's a tendency to wait for the perfect solution, when it's more important to act on the pretty-good ideas now.***
>
> ***We already have technical solutions, if we were prepared to implement them. We shouldn't be holding out for magical (easier/cheaper) solutions. The biggest problem is lack of commitment.***
>
> ***Climate change is a huge ongoing disaster for our planet. It has not been addressed in the last 30 years. We are at a critical breaking point, especially for our neighbours in the Pacific and future generations.***
>
> ***To accomplish [adaptation] before the effects of climate change become too much for our society to manage well, we needed to start this ten years ago.***

Social license to act on climate change

A range of MPs cited public resistance to change as a key factor slowing or stalling climate action. They told us that until the public is more concerned about and committed to climate adaptation, effective Parliamentary action is unlikely. The public will resent the cost of change, comply reluctantly or only partially with new regulations or laws, and punish at the ballot box the parties responsible for inflicting the changes.

Some MPs suggested that the most effective Parliamentary action on this issue for now would be supporting more education and communication on climate-related problems. This would build more public understanding of the need for climate action.

On the other hand, some MPs felt the social license was very much already in place, and that politicians were lagging on climate action.

> ***People want MPs to stop arguing about climate change and agree to a way forward.***
>
> ***The NZ public seems to care less [about climate change] than many [other countries], so we need to be better at explaining and justifying climate change attitudes.***
>
> ***Leaders need to do more but it must be grassroots driven change. People need to demand change for it to occur.***
>
> ***The fuel crisis due to the Iran situation is an opportunity and rationale for developing renewable energy.***



Protest in Bruges, Belgium. Photo by Efrem Efre via Pexels.

Findings: Divergent views

We found several patterns of disagreement among the MPs we met.

MPs had a wide spread of views and less agreement on a range of important questions, including:

- What to do to respond to climate change
- How quickly to respond
- How much NZ should/must spend on climate response
- How, whether, and to what extent to protect agriculture
- Whether NZ should aim to mitigate climate change as well as adapt to it
- What are the key risks when developing a climate strategy for NZ, particularly in relation to:
    - Negative effects on living standards (whether from action or inaction)
    - Choosing the wrong initiatives (when is doing nothing preferable to doing the suggested or popular thing? which are token actions or excuses not to do the difficult things that would make a difference?)
    - Expectations of our main trading partners (which approaches could reduce our appeal, for example as a source of goods or a tourist destination?)
- Which is the greater threat right now, climate change panic or apathy?
- What is the appropriate or necessary role of the state in addressing climate change? (consider: central government's role; private sector; local government; citizens assemblies; community groups; and foreign trade partners)
- What is the appropriate or necessary role of New Zealand in the worldwide climate response? (to lead or follow, provide an example of good practice, or steer clear of change?)
- How willing are the public to change their habits (for example consume less, alter how they use energy, etc.)
- Whether the NZ public is hungry for a climate response, allergic to climate action, or indifferent.

This can read like a Five Ws list: **who** should act, **what** should they do, **when** should they aim to achieve their goals, **where** should they focus (rural or urban, mitigation or adaptation, regulations or subsidies), and **how** will they sustain these efforts long-term. The only W most agree on is **why** they must act – because climate change is real, and is already causing problems for New Zealand.

Additional observations made by some MPs

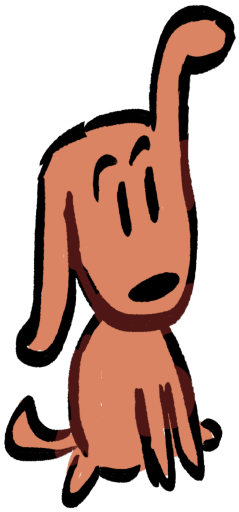
Other topics also provide a window to some MPs' active and specific concerns. MPs who mentioned these topics usually did so as an important context that should shape climate strategy, rather than central issues to be addressed. None of these topics was raised by a majority of the MPs we met.

Māori and Te Tiriti should have a larger role

Some MPs noted that Māori already have a role in climate change, with marae often hosting as community centres when floods or slips or cyclones drive people from their homes. The MPs cite mātauranga Māori as valuable knowledge to guide climate action, and iwi as critical partners in developing a climate response strategy for Aotearoa. Some MPs specify this is a matter of Māori rights.

> ***There needs to be an understanding of the position of the Treaty, and the concept and practice of partnership. Māori have tikanga rights.***
>
> ***Don't leave addressing Climate Change to politicians, work with iwi and community groups.***
>
> ***Māori are concerned about protecting the environment. They are future focussed on the next generation.***
>
> ***The challenge [for NZ's response to climate change] is to understand the purpose of the Treaty, Māori culture and Māori special rights. Māori are well placed to have a specific strategy within the climate change strategy. The policy is tikanga for Māori. It needs to be embedded.***
>
> ***NZ carbon emissions are an ongoing breach of the Treaty.***

Youth are worried we are leaving a big problem to them

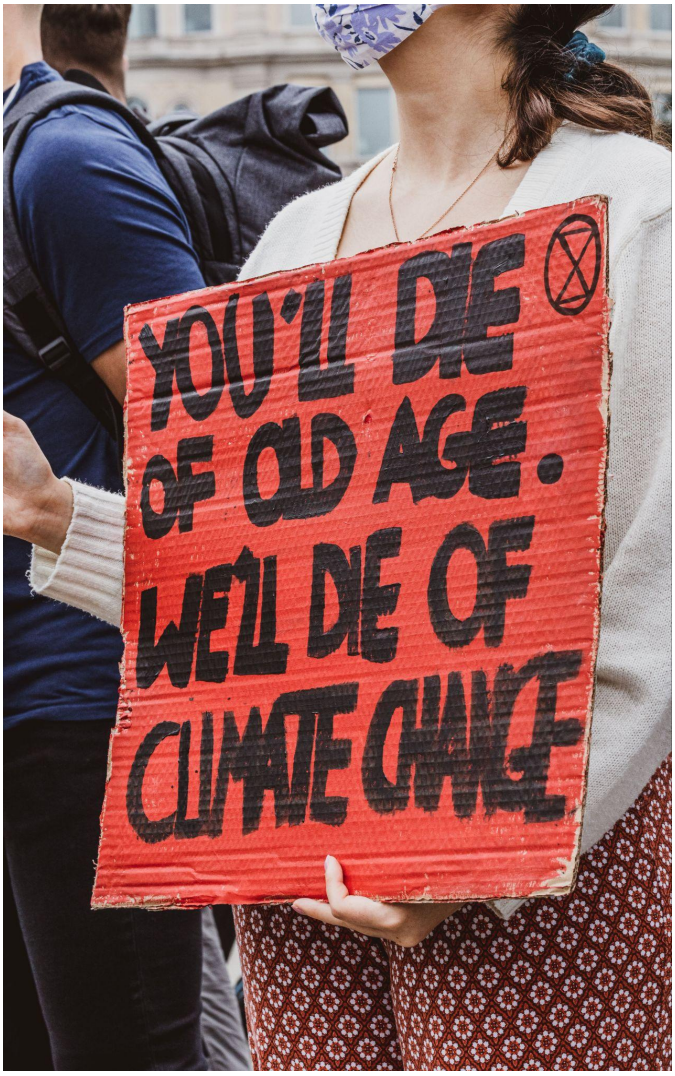


Many MPs of all ages expressed concern for young people and an awareness that they are deeply worried about climate change. Some MPs found this troubling, feeling that some interest groups deliberately catastrophise about climate danger and thereby contribute to a youth mental health crisis. Other MPs spoke about being motivated to leave the country in a better state for our children and grandchildren.

> ***We need to hold on to hope - there is a lot of hope, in young people and the impact they can have, and in older people thinking about the world their grandchildren will live in.***
>
> ***[There is a] serious mental health crisis amongst young people - it's not just cellphones and social media, but they are being told the world is going to burn. Instead, we should tell them that yes there are problems, but each can be dealt with.***

The repeated mentions of younger people had a concerning subtext. A number of MPs suggested that the current generation of leaders are unable or unlikely to act on climate change (for political and other reasons) and so it will be left to the next generations to address. Others seemed to imply that climate change is not a current issue but a future one, and so it does not need government attention at this time. Underpinning the many pronouncements that climate change is an issue for young people is a hint of justifying 'kicking the can down the road'.

> ***The next generation will be the future - they will act on this issue in a faster and stronger way than our generation.***
>
> ***While older generations don't 'get it', younger people are concerned and understand climate change, and this is a basis for future action.***
>
> ***If we do not address climate change, our generation will be okay but our grandchildren's generation will pay and suffer more and more from extreme climate events.***



Seen at a London protest. Photo by Kevin Grieve via Pexels.

Leadership is missing in action

While it was not a major theme, a range of MPs had strong views about how leadership is a significant part of the reason why New Zealand appears to have stalled in responding to climate change. These MPs generally said the willingness to act is there, as is the public demand for climate action, but we lack leadership and reasonable ideas on what would make a difference.

> ***Huge lack of leadership – [we] have got into a right/left difference over climate change.***

> ***There is no strategic thinking about climate change currently – it is not factored into plans for potential managed retreat, infrastructure planning, etc.***

> ***The problem isn't developing consensus, it's the lack of initiatives.***

> ***The Climate Commission is giving free and frank advice, but the challenge is getting the leaders to listen to that difficult advice which does not suit their short term interests.***

Is this central government's issue to handle?

Among MPs who addressed the issue of the role central government should play in addressing climate change in New Zealand, three main reasons were given for why government should act: a duty of care for citizens and their quality of life; reducing uncertainty about what citizens can expect from government, so they can make long-term plans and investments; and protecting our economy.

MPs spoke about economic incentives far more often than other reasons to act.

> Duty of care

> ***All governments should have a duty of care or an obligation to protect people in communities from the impacts of climate change.***

> Reducing uncertainty so others can plan and act

> ***Farmers have raised the issue of the shortness of the electoral cycle which leads to uncertainty of future decision-making and disincentivises investment in [climate adaptation] and progress in long term industries such as theirs.***

> ***Government can't keep paying out market value when climate disasters destroy homes, for example. While insurers and banks have a role in terms of pricing for environmental risk, they are not yet up to speed on this aspect of their work. Government needs to think through its own response to climate disasters.***

> Protecting the economy

> ***We need to be seen as 'clean and green' to maintain the value of our primary produce exports.***

> ***So far Standard and Poors and the other economic rating agencies have not focussed on NZ's lowered climate response and factored it into our international ratings, but it is only a matter of time.***

> ***Climate change action or lack of action both threaten financial stability.***

> ***[We should] avoid paying for NZ's liabilities due to not meeting its commitments; keep the funding on-shore by devoting more financial resources to climate change mitigation here.***

Lobbying has become influential, possibly too much so

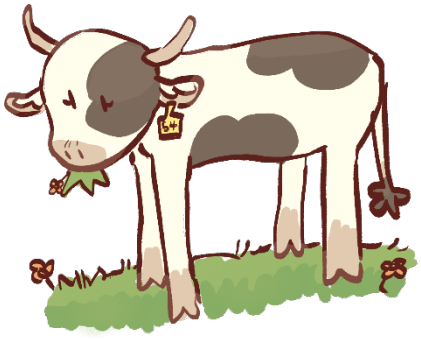
Lobbying about climate change action was a concern. This is linked to MPs' worries about weak data, questionable science, and a politicised belief-system. All of these are themes raised by energy sector lobbyists. Several MPs who wanted to learn more about climate science and adaptation found that lobbyists could be knowledgeable sources for explanations and advice. For MPs who are concerned that climate activists will only repeat alarming claims, hearing from the energy sector is a form of research. Other MPs were very worried about the motives and influence of lobbyists.

> ***Allies and major international corporations want us to stay hooked on fossil fuels, and lobby or incentivise our government to do so.***
>
> ***Even the most damaging industries are able to lobby government successfully.***
>
> ***[One barrier to climate action is] increased lobbying and its success in changing – weakening – climate mitigation laws.***
>
> ***Enforce the Standing Orders that prohibit MPs linking donations to actions. Follow the money to identify people and parties acting in bad faith.***

MPs worry about protecting agriculture and farmers' interests

Many MPs across the spectrum are concerned about how climate change and any government action to address it will affect the agricultural sector, and how farmers' interests affect Parliamentary politics. MPs' views on this topic varied widely.

> ***The agriculture sector sees climate change efforts as an attack on their livelihood.***
>
> ***On the left, there is a tendency to cast farmers as problems, not credit them for the efforts they are making.***
>
> ***The farming community is mostly still in denial.***
>
> ***Given our economy, reducing CO_2 emissions is particularly challenging. The agricultural sector is virtually exempt from climate-sensitive regulation. It has been given a free pass.***



> ***The Federated Farmers and Dairying groups would all admit individually and privately that this was a serious issue, but they would never admit to this in public statements. They were losing members to Groundswell, which made them nervous of strong statements about the effects of climate change on farming.***

Will the insurance and banking industries price climate risks for us?

Several MPs pointed out that these financial industries play an important role in New Zealand's climate response. Increased insurance premiums, refusal to insure buildings in certain areas, and banks' changing willingness to lend for purchases in some locations will all affect New Zealand voters. Because these industries establish specific costs for foreseeable risks, their understanding of climate risk will directly affect New Zealanders' finances and so will drive public understanding.

For some MPs, this is a simple way to let the market incentivise individuals to make more climate-conscious choices. Other MPs worry that recent Government changes to climate rules will spook these industries into charging New Zealanders more and working with us less when we want to finance our climate adaptation efforts.

> ***I rely on information from the insurance industry, who are well-positioned with their research into risks.***
>
> ***Insurance will be more expensive and thus less accessible.***
>
> ***Involve insurance and banking sectors to mitigate financial costs to New Zealanders.***
>
> ***The current Government's policies mean that international finance sees New Zealand as high risk. New Zealanders will eventually pay as reinsurers demand increased premiums.***

Foreign policy and trade vulnerabilities are part of the conversation

MPs spoke about international aspects of climate change intermittently. Those who did were clear that New Zealand's climate strategy must align with foreign trade and policy settings.

> ***Our foreign policy needs to put climate response as a top priority.***
>
> ***We are going to have to do something or there will be significant detrimental impacts for trade, as our trading partners will not accept our no/slow progress on emissions.***
>
> ***We cannot afford to get too far ahead or too far behind our trading partners. We need to find the real ambitions of our top five partners, and decarbonize at the same speed as the rest of the world.***
>
> ***Global signals are that the US is retreating on climate commitments without consequence, making it harder for other countries to justify making sacrifices.***
>
> ***New Zealanders need to do their bit to reduce the impact of [climate change]. But it needs the US and China to act. We are at their mercy.***
>
> ***We should work with Australia on a common approach to insurance for the impact of climate change. … We could also develop a strong regional regulatory structure for New Zealand and Australia and the Pacific.***
>
> ***We can strengthen our international ties and reputation by doing more on climate change.***

Is climate change also a national security concern?

Few MPs talked about climate change as a security threat, but those who did made compelling points. With geopolitical tensions increasing and global supply lines less reliable, MPs pointed out that there are growing threats to our food security and energy security. There is much that New Zealand does not produce here; for decades our economic strategy has been to focus our industries on what we can do well here and buy many of our necessities from other countries. MPs said that if, as seems likely, we will need to be more self-reliant in the coming decades, we should develop climate resilience by further diversifying what we produce. We should do this not as an economic strategy, but as a national security measure.

> ***Public policy should emphasise fuel security, energy security, cost of living, national security.***

> ***Renewables seem to be ok to talk about. 'Renewable energy' is a good start, and the term 'energy security' is also palatable.***

How concerned should we be about our international agreements?

Only a handful of MPs directly mentioned New Zealand's commitments on international climate agreements, although concern about meeting our targets under these agreements was implied by many more. A few MPs were concerned that these agreements have created unnecessary vulnerabilities, leaving the country potentially liable for paying penalties if we fail to meet targets or are found to be not making a good-faith effort to achieve them. One set of MPs viewed honouring these commitments as critical to maintaining New Zealand's credibility as a trustworthy international actor. Others appeared to consider the agreements as ineffectual, more like political theatre or virtue-signalling than actual commitments. Overall, the MPs who spoke to this point seemed to believe New Zealand's climate actions are more scrutinised overseas than leaders previously understood.

> ***We need to test the openness of our trading partners towards NZ's weak commitment to addressing climate change.***

> ***One hope might be the jolt to agricultural trade if the EU took NZ to court for its deliberate ignoring of both the Free Trade Treaty and our signing up to the Paris Agreement.***

What specific climate impacts do MPs expect we may see?

Many MPs focused on physical harm to buildings, infrastructure and the land from events such as flooding, slips, and high winds, with consequent harm to the people whose homes, workplaces, and ancestral lands are affected. Other MPs spoke about companies and even industries failing if they are unable to adapt quickly enough to changing costs, conditions, and market demand. Economic downturn and job losses might follow. A few MPs went further, thinking about the loss of whole island nations and cultures.

> ***Increasing weather events are causing the loss of infrastructure and lives. Other countries will suffer decreased crop growth and we will see an increase in food insecurity and loss of economic base from the Pacific. We will start to see more climate change refugees which will impact their loss of culture and sovereignty. We will also lose biodiversity which will have a real flow-on effect.***

The impact is not only on the local people but on their ancestors (tīpuna). When the urupā is disturbed by floods or coastal erosion, the spiritual link between the people of the marae and their tīpuna is threatened.

Some houses get flooded every year, impacting the nearby communities and hitting people's life savings. Businesses are also impacted - they can't get business insurance, and some types of businesses can no longer operate in the area so have to move or close eg food manufacture. I know pensioners who just can't afford insurance - insurance premiums have gone up hugely, related to the extra flooding (plus new $1200 excess on each flood claim).



Coastal communities may need to be relocated which will not be popular and can lead to resentment and community resistance.

If we continue to maintain our current path, climate induced death and destruction will occur and the economic impact will be astronomical.

Climate change has an impact on food production, as in which crops can be grown. Because of ocean warming there is an effect on our fisheries. There is also an impact on tourism. As well, there is [rethinking needed on] where we build. And along with these issues comes the rising cost of insurance and affordability.



Photo by Ethan Brooke via Pexels

There were also a small number of MPs who did not expect New Zealand to experience particularly challenging climate effects, except potentially from government overreach.

> ***I haven't seen any serious impact of climate change. There may have been more drought and hot spells recently, but then we had the best snow on [skifield] for years in 2020.***
>
> ***Climate change is a real thing; however, in New Zealand, at least, we are unlikely to all die because of it. The world isn't going to end….The country runs on 95% renewable energy with its extensive hydro-power and with increasing wind and solar power. There is sufficient renewable energy to electrify the fleet, to run farms and data centres.***
>
> ***Whatever action is taken, it should have no overt impact on the economy, such as restrictions on business, excessive regulation, government subsidies, impact on consumers.***

Recent events influenced the meetings

MPs' views and the conversations at our meetings were strongly influenced by three developments from the past few years:

> Financial distress

Inflation, rising interest rates, concerns about government spending and borrowing, and challenging increases in the cost-of-living all demanded attention and made doing anything about climate change seem both less urgent and less affordable.

> ***Because there are costs that will be incurred immediately, and so many financial demands on the government, there's a disincentive to start spending that money yet.***

> Weather events

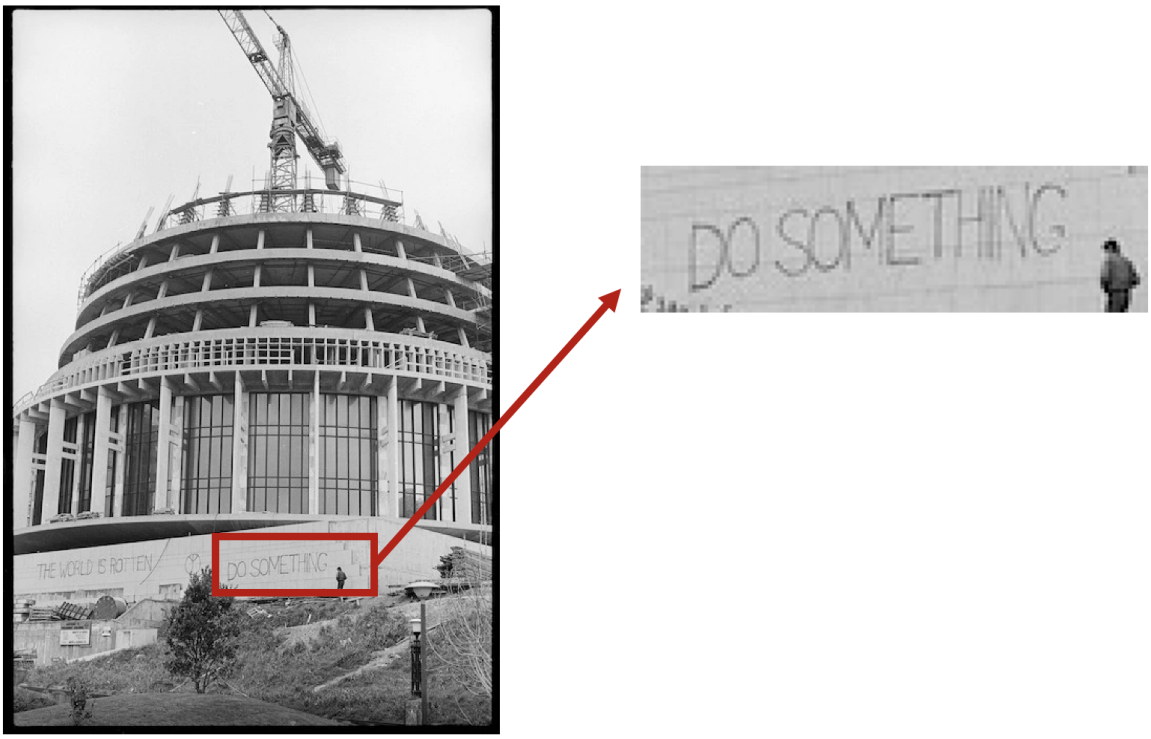
While storms are normal, the intensity, frequency, and damage caused by recent weather events had some MPs worrying that New Zealand cannot afford to delay acting on climate change. Other MPs found these worries undue.

> ***Random weather events have been happening since Adam was a cowboy.***
>
> ***100 year floods are happening every 100 days. The impact of floods of this frequency cannot be controlled and managed on an ongoing basis.***

> Iran war and the price of fossil fuels

In early 2026 the US began a war with Iran that resulted in the closure of the Strait of Hormuz. This throttled the movement of fossil fuels from the Middle East and triggered fuel shortages and price increases throughout the world. Increasing the use of renewable energy in New Zealand became a shared goal across political parties. Some MPs continued to be sceptical about climate change and were not looking to renewables as a means of lowering emissions, but this war's effect on fuel prices created more consensus about what action New Zealand should take on energy.

> ***The fuel crisis due to the Iran situation is an opportunity and rationale for developing renewable energy.***



Many MPs were emotional about the climate change response so far

Many MPs we met care deeply about this issue. They occasionally expressed deep frustration and even anger about their colleagues' approach to climate change. Others' fervour showed in gloves-off dismissive word choice and tone. This happened across the political spectrum. MPs criticised the parties in opposition or the coalition government for their tactics, their understanding, their attitudes and their choices. MPs were convinced that others in Parliament were overly complacent and doing too little on climate issues, or fanning hysteria and driving poor decisions. Each side is concerned the other is insincere and using the climate issue to score political points. Some fear we are leaving New Zealanders overly vulnerable to climate-related damage. Others fear we will damage our industries and our overall economy by setting burdensome regulations and wasting government funding.

Fear, anger, disgust and despair all feature in MPs' statements.

> ***A lot of politicians are just populists. They will go for whatever will get them votes.***
>
> ***It is an existential threat to human kind. It keeps me up at night. We are collectively killing ourselves.***
>
> ***It is a very challenging time and parliament is not currently necessarily the place for rational discussion.***
>
> ***I get really frustrated at the hopelessness and hysteria of various groups in NZ.***

Climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our generation – and I thought this 20 years ago. Now there are fewer climate deniers; however, action to address climate change is going backward. We are failing.

What's in the way? Political will. There's more for parties to gain from cosying up to the high emitters.

There are small groups around parliament with infantile 14-year-old behaviour.

It's real. It's happening. Globally we are not on track to bypass the consequences of climate change. Holding the increase in temperature to 1.5 or 2 degrees is increasingly out of reach. We're fucked.

However, many believe they can work together constructively and make a difference

There are people in National who would love to be with the Greens.

We should acknowledge that this complicated and critically important issue should override politics.

There is cross-party acceptance that the weather is definitely changing; however, there is a need for agreement about what people need to do, what they can do and what policies would be effective.

A famous New Zealander once declared: "Gentlemen, we have run out of money. It is time to start thinking." - Ernest Rutherford

Today, regarding climate issues, we say:

Citizens, we have run out of time. It is time to start acting.

MPs' ideas: what can they do?

When we asked MPs what they would consider doing in response to climate change, they offered a range of specific actions that they felt could be pursued, including ongoing ones that could be improved. The ideas were usually spontaneous examples and should not be read as a set of thoroughly explored, ready-for-deployment initiatives.

Idea	MP views
Emissions Trading Scheme	Some are wary, some embrace it; there's concern over keeping funding in the country rather than paying overseas to meet emissions targets
EV subsidy	Some view this as an economically naïve, expensive mistake, others as a timely and effective catalyst for reducing dependence on fossil fuels
Invest in agri-tech	Some support this, others say let other countries do this work
Pest trapping on conservation and other lands	Simple, good for forests, climate, and conservation, and already undertaken by various Predator Free community groups
Government payouts after floods, fires, etc	Could quickly get too expensive; creates confusion on responsibilities of insurance
LNG import facility	Some view this as a regressive step that invests in an energy source that will quickly grow irrelevant; others consider it a smart move to prevent the immense disruption of an abrupt cut-off of fossil fuels. ***"I would love it if we did not need it, but the reality is, we do"***
Fund marae to extend their community support capabilities when natural disaster occurs	This could involve funding new buildings, or simply improving marae emergency supplies
Focus on pricing to effect desired behaviours	Tax to penalize some behaviours; avoid incentives as these can backfire or be gamed
Extend electrification in transport	Buses and rail were mentioned
Improve the measurement of economic impact of projects	Will help track the effectiveness of initiatives and whether to increase, reduce or end their funding
Invest more in STEM	Build people who can work in green innovation
Develop and embrace renewable energy • Commercialise hydrogen • Loan scheme to help businesses and households transition to renewables • Economic zone for new energy development • Build more hydro dams • Set up resource consent-free industrial zones to speed starting renewable energy initiatives	With renewables we can reduce emissions and also become energy self-sufficient. ***"Get the energy piece right and everything flows from that"***
Decarbonise	Remove greenhouse gases from the atmosphere to slow or reverse climate change
Multidisciplinary thinking by a range of experts to advise government	Similar to Singapore's approach
Improve biosecurity to account for impact of warmer temperatures	Be prepared to block invasive species that will come with warmer temperatures
Better waste management	Recycle more to reduce production of new plastics
Reduce our consumption	Use fewer things that drive climate change

Planetary boundary food agreements / trade barriers	International agreements on what can be produced in which regions on basis of climate suitability, eg NZ ok to produce dairy and beef, but not coffee or bananas
Involve affected locals in conversations about adaptation	Build public support
Learn from other countries	Shortcut to finding initiatives that work
Promote collectivism (cooperation for public good)	Increases people's willingness to change their habits
Schools to serve as community hubs around climate measures and resilience, education on climate	Use them as infrastructure that already exists for community learning
Improve fast-track legislation	To improve scrutiny
Encourage people to grow food	Build self-sufficiency, reduce transport
Lengthen Parliamentary term	3 year cycle encourages short-term initiatives
Rebuild NZ's international reputation	Important for our trade and commitment to kiwi ideals
Work with insurance and banking sectors to mitigate financial costs to NZers	Make climate adaptation affordable
National Resilience Fund	Ringfence funding for climate response
Ensure Māori and Pasifika people are involved in climate change work	Some young Māori and Pacific peoples feel cut out of it
Educate via mass media and social media	Social advertising builds consensus
Strengthen our evidence and communication	Build shared understanding and commitment to climate action
Integrate rangatahi into decision-making	Young people have an immense stake
Facilitate more use of solar energy for home heating	Help people do what's good for the planet, for their pocketbooks, and NZ generally
Speed up the consenting process for renewables	Make a difference faster
Managed retreat	Prevention matters; move homes and towns away from dangerous zones
Smarter infrastructure planning	Integrate climate resilience into planning and consenting
Re-mandate the compulsory food scraps collection	Restore curbside collection of food scrap waste across the country
Don't allow developers to get exemptions from local government building decisions	Incentivise cooperation with climate regulations, not dodging
Make Waste a Crown entity	Build centralized comprehensive standards and practices for waste reduction, reduce local council burden
Need irreversible legislation	Stop the flip-flopping on important legislation
Invest in industries that will have well-paying jobs after climate adaptation	Similar pay scales to what people receive now in industries that will shrink or fail due to climate adaptation
Innovate in aquaculture	Seize opportunity to lead here
Strengthen transparency between insurers and households	Shared understanding of risk pricing and long-term strategies
Establish a 'Minister for the Future'	In Wales, this Minister sits at Cabinet and continually asks what effect each decision will have on future generations.

The ideas range from small efforts to massive ones, inexpensive to immensely expensive, and well-recognized to cautiously innovative. Parliament could act on any of them.

Conclusion

This report is not about climate change as a physical phenomenon. It is about politics, competing understandings, and the distance between recognising a problem and acting on it.

MPs are deeply aware of their differences when it comes to addressing climate change. For them to work together more constructively and effectively on the issues, the MPCC working group believes it is important that MPs acknowledge and understand where they agree on climate change: their concerns, their ideas, and, in many cases, their willingness to work across parties to make progress.

We found that MPs do share many of the same concerns and priorities about climate change and related topics. They largely agree that their constituents worry about insurance affordability, fuel security, and recovery from storms and floods. They agree farmers have embraced changes – far more than they are usually credited with – to make their industry more climate friendly.

What divides MPs are often choices such as whether they feel it is more important to raise the alarm so as to get more action under way, or more important to reassure the public so that New Zealanders can adapt to climate shifts in the least disruptive ways possible.

The MPs who met with us differ substantially over what specifically Parliament should do and how quickly it should take action on climate change. Nevertheless, there is meaningful common ground about the nature of the problem, the constraints within which decisions must be made, and the value of finding a more enduring way to set climate policy.

Taken together, the MPs' views on climate change suggest that the principal opportunity for greater cross-party engagement lies in letting go of the desire for complete agreement, and building from a more modest shared foundation that already exists.

Based on MPs' comments from our meetings, this shared foundation consists of:

- an acceptance that climate change presents long-term risks
- a concern for future generations
- the need for stronger resilience and adaptation
- the commitment to remaining economically sound both for governments and as a nation
- a desire for stronger public engagement and commitment on the issue.

A Call to Action

Climate change is not going away. It must be addressed, for the sake of this and the next generations. The challenge now is to turn the common ground identified in this report into action. That will require MPs to look beyond the positions of their parties and work where cooperation is possible, even when agreement on broader questions remains elusive. It also requires them to question whether the political constraints they perceive are as fixed as they believe, or whether some could be overcome through a willingness to engage with colleagues across party lines.

Political parties, their leaders and staff have a responsibility to make discussion and engagement on climate possible, rather than treating cooperation as disloyalty. They must govern for the long-term as well as the short-term. Parliament should consider how better to support policies to endure beyond electoral cycles. And voters and the media have an important part to play in recognising

constructive disagreement, intellectual honesty and that a willingness to change one's mind based on new evidence is a strength.

Ultimately, responsibility rests with individual representatives. We should not expect them to agree on everything, or always to be right. But they should be prepared to examine the evidence, question their assumptions and exercise their own judgement, including when doing so is politically uncomfortable. The question is not whether our representatives have sufficient common ground on which to act, but whether they are prepared to use it. We, our land and our seas, expect nothing less.

> ***All political parties support fairness. So work at building consensus. There is more alignment around climate change in Parliament than the politicians think.***


A Call To Action
Members Of Parliament On Climate Change
To: Members of the 55th Parliament
As Parliamentarians, what difference will you make?

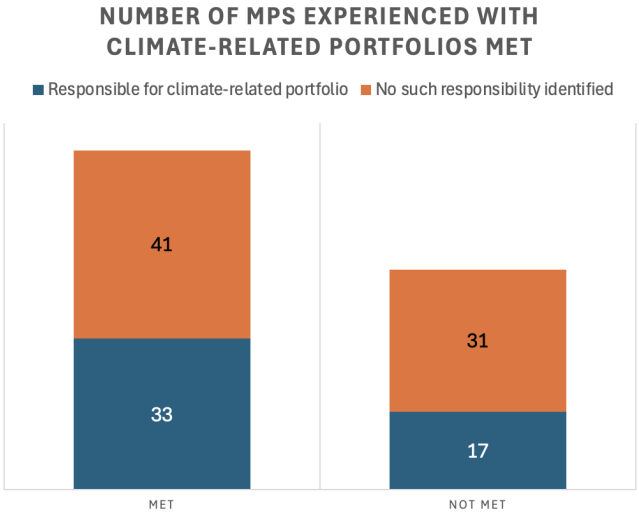
Appendix – Characteristics of participating MPs

This section reviews evidence on how many of the MPs participating in this project have characteristics that may suggest strong interest in or knowledge about climate change. Ideally we wanted to meet with a balance of MPs who are strongly engaged with climate issues and those for whom other topics loom larger. Unlike the main report, this appendix uses AI as well as manual research to populate the tables used in the analysis.

The four characteristics or backgrounds considered here are:

- holding a climate-related portfolio
- participating in the National Party's Blue-Green advisory group on environmental issues
- Māori and/or Pasifika ethnicity
- Gender, because there is research showing a climate 'gender gap', with women slightly more likely than men to be concerned about the environment and climate change.[7]

MPs who have held climate-related portfolios



Across Parliament, 50 MPs – 41% of all 122 MPs – now hold or have held portfolios related to climate topics.

For this analysis, climate-related portfolios are: Climate Change, Environment, Conservation, Oceans/Fisheries, Biosecurity, Agriculture/Primary Industries, Water, Emergency Management/Civil Defence, Energy/Resources, Forestry, Transport, Infrastructure, Local Government, Regional Development, RMA Reform, Rural Communities, Just Transitions, and closely related natural-resource roles. Ministerial, associate-minister, parliamentary-under-secretary and opposition/party spokesperson roles are included. Select committee membership alone is excluded.

Two thirds (33 out of 50) of MPs with climate-related portfolio experience participated in meetings for this report. This compares with 57% of MPs without such portfolio experience who met with us. In all, just under half of the MP inputs for this report came from members who had climate-related portfolio experience (47%), and just over half came from those who had no identified background in those portfolios (56%).

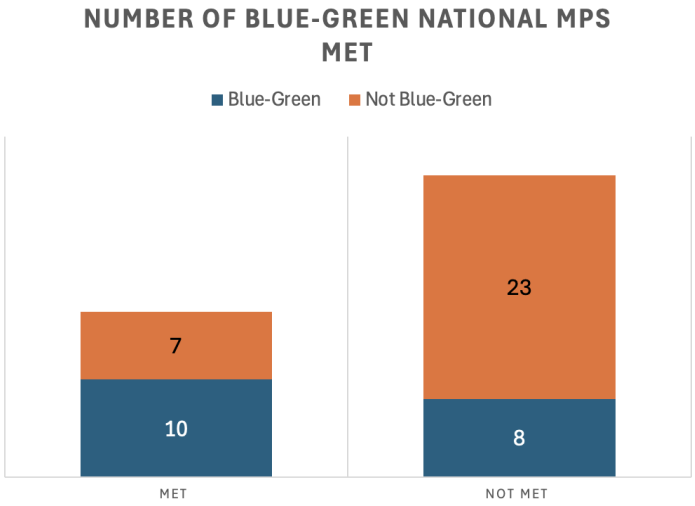
[7] See Ballew, Mathew, et al, "Gender Differences in Public Understanding of Climate Change," Yale Program on Climate Change Communication, 20 November 2018, https://climatecommunication.yale.edu/publications/ accessed 19 September 2026.

Climate/environment portfolio experience	All current MPs	Met with us	Not met
Have or had responsibility for a climate-related portfolio	50	33	17
None identified	72	41	31
Total	122	74	48

'None identified' means no relevant portfolio for this individual was found in the official/party records reviewed; it is not a claim that no obscure or very short-lived historical assignment ever existed. Key source: New Zealand Parliament member biographies (current and former roles), supplemented by current party portfolio pages and Beehive/National/Labour/Green/ACT/NZ First pages where more recent.

For this analysis, climate-related portfolios are: Climate Change, Environment, Conservation, Oceans/Fisheries, Biosecurity, Agriculture/Primary Industries, Water, Emergency Management/Civil Defence, Energy/Resources, Forestry, Transport, Infrastructure, Local Government, Regional Development, RMA Reform, Rural Communities, Just Transitions, and closely related natural-resource roles. Ministerial, associate-minister, parliamentary-under-secretary and opposition/party spokesperson roles are included. Select committee membership alone is excluded.

National Party's Blue-Green participation

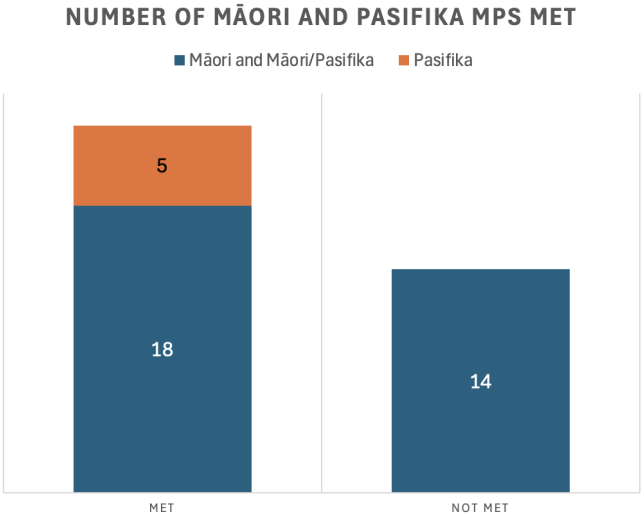


Ten of the 18 National Party MPs for whom we found some public evidence of Blue-Green identity or association met with us for this project (56%). The Blue-Greens are the National Party's policy advisory group on environmental issues, which encompasses climate change concerns. Blue-Greens are expected to consider both environmental and economic objectives. Of the 30 National MPs for whom no public Blue-Green evidence was identified, seven (23%) participated. This suggests that the views of less climate-conscious National MPs may be underrepresented.

Blue-green evidence category	All current National MPs	National MPs who met with us	National MPs not met
Yes, evidence of Blue-Green participation	18	10	8
No public Blue-Green evidence identified	30	7	23
Total	48	17	31

The dataset does not infer Blue-Green participation from environmental portfolios, voting records, occupation, or policy positions. 'Yes — evidence of Blue-Green participation' includes MPs with direct self-identification as Blue-Green, formal leadership/executive membership, explicit member/caucus association, as well as attendance or speaking at a Blue-Greens forum. 'No public Blue-Greens evidence identified' means no qualifying evidence was found in the sources reviewed; it is not a claim about an MP's private political identity. Key source: https://assets.national.org.nz/Bluegreens%202020%20Newsletter.pdf

Māori and/or Pasifika MPs' participation



We met with 62% of the MPs with Māori and/or Pasifika ethnicity, including all Pasifika MPs. Members with these ethnicities may have more informed and more engaged views on climate change because these ethnic groups are particularly exposed – physically, culturally, and financially – to climate-related damage.

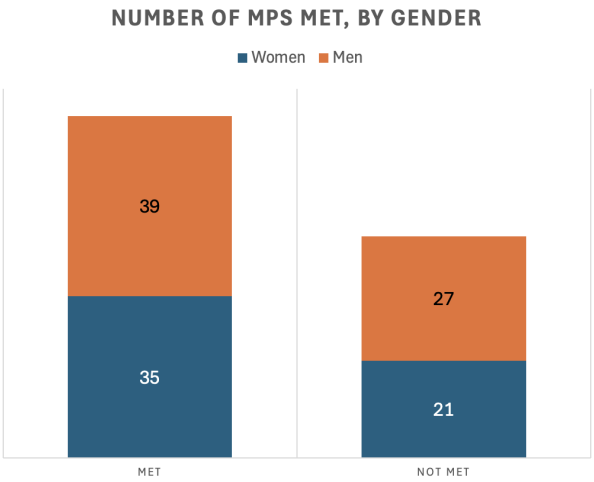
We consider Māori MPs' views as essential to climate consensus because of Māori principles of kaitiakitanga (guardianship and protection, particularly of natural resources) and manaakitanga (collective responsibility). In addition, it is possible iwi may have Treaty claims if the Crown does not adequately safeguard the land from climate-related damage. MPs of all ethnicities noted that Māori are disproportionately vulnerable to climate-related damage due to where many live.

Pasifika MPs may provide more informed insight into the climate-related concerns affecting our Pacific island partners and associates. Several Pacific island nations are deeply concerned about climate-related sea-level rise, with some already significantly affected by it. All Pasifika MPs met with us.
Of the 33 current MPs who identified as Māori and Māori/Pasifika, 18 participated in interviews (56%).

Ethnicity	All current MPs	Met with us	Not met
Māori and Māori/Pasifika	32	18	14
Pasifika	5	5	0
Not identified as Māori and/or Pasifika in cited sources	85	51	34
Total	122	74	48

The Māori classification uses Te Ao Māori News' end-of-term list of current Māori MPs in the 54th Parliament, published 25 September 2026, supplemented by New Zealand Parliament historical information. The Te Ao list identifies 32 current MPs as Māori. The Pasifika classification uses the New Zealand Parliament historical list, which notes that completeness cannot be guaranteed because ethnicity is compiled from publicly available sources where MPs have voluntarily self-identified. 'Not identified' should therefore not be read as a definitive statement that an MP has no Māori or Pasifika ancestry. Key Māori source: https://www.teaonews.co.nz/2026/09/25/54th-parliament-34-maori-mps-started-39-served-32-remain/. Key Pasifika source: https://www3.parliament.nz/en/visit-and-learn/mps-and-parliaments-1854-onwards/pacific-mps-in-the-new-zealand-parliament-1993-onwards/. MP with both Māori and Pasifika heritage is grouped with Māori to avoid making that person identifiable.

Participation by gender



There is research showing a climate 'gender gap', with women slightly more likely than men to be concerned about the environment and climate change.[8] Nonetheless, we found minimal gender-based difference in MPs' participation in meetings for this report. Women are 46% of all 122 MPs, 47% of the MPs who participated, and 44% of the MPs who did not participate.

Gender	All current MPs	Met with us	Not met
Women	56	35	21
Men	66	39	27
Total	122	74	48

Gender is coded from the New Zealand Parliament's 'Women members of the New Zealand Parliament' historical list, last updated 6 March 2026. Current MPs appearing on that list are coded 'Woman'; other current MPs are coded 'Man'. We are not aware of any current gender diverse or gender other MPs. Key source: https://www3.parliament.nz/en/visit-and-learn/mps-and-parliaments-1854-onwards/women-members-of-the-new-zealand-parliament-1933-onwards/

[8] See Ballew, Mathew, et al, "Gender Differences in Public Understanding of Climate Change," Yale Program on Climate Change Communication, 20 November 2018, https://climatecommunication.yale.edu/publications/ accessed 19 September 2026.

Who we are

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