

Press Release: Climate Change Fact Sheets

Two professional groups have teamed together to make a series of fact sheets on climate change which they plan to make widely available. The purpose of the sheets is to increase understanding of the risks climate change presents and the ways that these risks can be addressed.

The fact sheets are an initiative of the professional engineers' group, Engineers for Social Responsibility (ESR), together with the Sustainable Energy Forum (SEF). They are compiled by experts and peer reviewed, but are written so as to be clear and easy to understand. It is planned to make them available to MPs, business leaders, local councils, schools and the general public.

An initial set of nine papers was presented at a launch on Tuesday 18th April, at Auckland University of Technology. AUT Professor Thomas Neitzert introduced a number of speakers including Professor Ralph Sims of Massey University, just returned from an Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) meeting in Berlin.

Ralph Sims pointed out that New Zealand was failing to meet even the very modest 5% emissions-reduction target on 1990 levels set by the Government for the year 2020. Instead we are heading for 26% over those levels by 2020 using the latest Ministry for the Environment projections. Per head of population, New Zealand is now the fourth-worst carbon emitter in the world, after Australia, the US and Canada.

Also speaking at the launch were ESR founder and former President of the Institution of Professional Engineers New Zealand, Gerry Te Kapa Coates; Convener of SEF Steve Goldthorpe; current ESR President Ross Rutherford; and coordinator of this initiative John La Roche of ESR.

John La Roche explained that ESR and SEF are concerned about the consequences of human-induced climate change and global warming and the need for widespread understanding of the facts and underlying science. "The implications of global warming as the result of increasing CO₂ level in the atmosphere are very serious. We believe that New Zealand should be doing far more to change from burning fossil fuels to using renewable energy sources."

ESR members want to see a carbon tax introduced that reflects the external environmental cost of carbon emissions. Our target for 2020 should be a reduction of 20% below 1990 levels, not the present target of 5%. Liquid fuels using sustainable sources should be encouraged. There should be tight controls and reducing reliance on the use of coal and oil for energy.

The initial set of papers includes: "Climate Change - Living in a Warmer World", by Dr. Jim Salinger; "The Carbon Cycle - towards becoming carbon neutral", by Gerry Te Kapa Coates; "The Importance of Methane" by Steve Goldthorpe; "Climate Change and Primary Industry" by Dr. David Painter; "New Zealand Energy Security & Climate Change", by Ross Rutherford; "Global Climate Change

from a Pacific Islands' Perspective", by Professor John E. Hay; "Climate Change and Human Health", by Drs. Hayley Bennett, Scott Metcalfe, and Rhys Jones; and "Ethical Issues and Climate Change", by Professor Jonathan Boston. An introduction and overview is provided in "Climate Change and Global Warming Risks and Responses", by John La Roche.

Further papers are currently being prepared and will be released in the next few months. It is planned to make the papers available to schools, together with related assignments for students. All papers are available from the ESR website <www.esr.org.nz>.

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