



Hon David Parker
Minister for the Environment
Parliament Buildings
Wellington

28 March 2018

Dear David

I am writing to you to request information regarding actions your Ministry may be undertaking in response to climate change issues highlighted in the environmental report *Our atmosphere and climate 2017*, published by the Ministry for the Environment and Statistics New Zealand under the Environmental Reporting Act 2015.

This request is made in relation to my role under this Act. As set out in Section 18, I have a broad role to comment on national state of the environment reports, which includes discussing implications of environmental reports and recommending responses to the findings contained within those reports.

Our atmosphere and climate 2017 contained information on significant increases in greenhouse gas emissions across the New Zealand economy since 1990, with 40% of these emissions coming from the energy and transport sectors.

In light of this, could you please provide answers to the following question?

1. *What work is the Ministry doing to ensure that planning for the on-going growth and development of our towns and cities incorporates climate mitigation aims and objectives?*

The report also highlighted a range of impacts from climate change that are either occurring now or will do so in the future. Among the current or future impacts of climate change, the report highlights the threat that rising sea levels pose to South Dunedin. Although far from unique, the challenge facing South Dunedin illustrates that the impacts of climate change are often highly local and specific, and the adaptive capacities of the regional and local authorities tasked with pre-empting them even more so.

In light of these issues, could you please provide answers to the following questions:

2. *What work is the Ministry doing to ensure that our towns and cities can adapt in a timely and effective manner to the impacts of climate change?*
3. *What work is the Ministry engaged in to assess the relative adaptive capacities of New Zealand's regional and local authorities?*

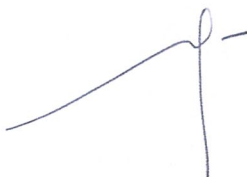
4. *What is the Ministry doing to assess whether regional and local authorities are sufficiently well resourced to pre-emptively adapt to climate change, thereby mitigating the worst of the risks that it may pose to local populations?*
5. *What is the Ministry doing to assess where the distribution of costs should fall between central and local government in order to ensure progress on adaptation is made?*
6. *More broadly, what is the Ministry's strategic approach to dealing with the risks that climate change poses to New Zealand's infrastructure? Is any work being done to estimate the cost of these risks?*
7. *What is the Ministry's strategic approach to dealing with the risks that climate change poses to New Zealand's natural resources? Is any work being done to estimate the cost of these risks?*

Our atmosphere and climate 2017 also contains information on the impacts of ozone depleting substances (ODS) on ozone concentrations and subsequent UV light levels. Due to the effectiveness of the Montreal Protocol, nitrous oxide is now the most significant remaining ODS. Given that this is also a potent greenhouse gas, and management of it will also have implications for water quality, could you please provide information on what the Ministry has done or is planning to do regarding the following:

8. *Addressing the impacts of nitrous oxide emissions on ozone concentrations.*
9. *Ensuring a coordinated approach to managing nitrous oxide with respect to climate change, ozone concentrations, and water quality.*

I would also welcome a meeting to discuss these issues with you following the reception of a reply to this letter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a long horizontal stroke followed by a vertical line and a small loop at the end.

Simon Upton
Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment

CC: Hon Eugenie Sage; Hon Scott Simpson; David Seymour, MP