



19 July 2018

Zero Carbon Bill Submission
Ministry for the Environment
PO Box 10362
Wellington 6143
Email: ZCB.Submissions@mfe.govt.nz

Dear Sir/Madam

Climate change is a serious and leading threat to health and health equity, both in New Zealand and worldwide. The New Zealand Society of Anaesthetists (NZSA) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Zero Carbon Bill as this legislation is a key measure towards protecting and improving the health and well-being of New Zealanders.

About the NZSA

The NZSA is a professional medical education society, which represents over 600 medical anaesthetists in New Zealand. Our members include specialist anaesthetists in public and private practice, and trainee anaesthetists. We facilitate and promote education and research into anaesthesia and advocate on behalf of our members, representing their professional interests and the safety of their patients. As an advocacy organisation, we develop submissions on policy and legislation, work collaboratively with key stakeholders, and foster networks of anaesthetists nationwide. The NZSA, established in 1948, also has strong global connections and is a Member Society of the World Federation of Societies of Anesthesiologists (WFSA).

Overview

The NZSA strongly supports the development of a Zero Carbon Act. Setting a long-term legislative target will clearly signal our country's commitment as a signatory to the Paris Agreement, and New Zealand's contribution to global action. We support the formation of a Climate Change Commission to provide independent expert advice, to set emissions budgets and to hold successive governments to account towards progress made. We in principle support our partner OraTaiao (the New Zealand Climate and Health Council), which has completed a thorough submission on the bill. We endorse their message that well planned and effective measures to mitigate climate change can have substantial health (and health equity) co-benefits, and lead to cost savings in the health sector.

Anaesthesia

Inhalational anaesthesia (by use of volatile agents and nitrous oxide gas) is intensely contributive to carbon emissions. Reducing inhalational anaesthesia may lower atmospheric carbon emissions, but a trade-off is that we increase 'disposable' plastic waste and landfill contamination with toxic drugs, which may contribute to other health impacts, and certainly have cost and environmental implications.



As a Society for Anaesthetists we are acutely aware of our contribution to healthcare's carbon footprint by the following means:

- Anaesthetic agents (volatiles)
- Travel, particularly in relation to continuing medical education (CME)
- Disposal of waste.

We would suggest strategies aimed at these factors. For example:

- Research into volatile and nitrous oxide capture/destruction.
- Encouraging and establishing carbon offsetting of travel, including but not limited to travel arising from CME.
- There are life cycle analyses for our 20 most common drugs (yet to be published) and for many of our devices (laryngoscopes, LMA's etc). A low carbon future world would include use of washable and reusable items wherever possible, and items for single use would be compostable, going to an appropriate waste stream.

These strategies will require the following government leadership and direction:

- A New Zealand equivalent of the UK's Sustainable Development Unit to coordinate change through the health sector, providing channels for information flow, and establishing pathways to achieving significant targets.
- A carbon budget and offset will need to be part of Vote Health.
- All DHBs, and indeed all healthcare organisations, will need to engage in CEMARS (Certified Emissions Measurement And Reduction Scheme), or an equivalent.
- If PHARMAC will control virtually all procurement, therefore determining the type of product purchased and used, then PHARMAC must establish carbon-based criteria on which to make spending decisions.
- The offsetting of costs needs to come back at the DHB/provider level; otherwise individuals will not change their practices and choices.
- Private healthcare will need to be just as engaged as the public health sector.

New Zealand Anaesthesia has a strong relationship with the Pacific and the impact of sea level changes will affect Pacific population health and migration, which may lead to further inequalities in the Pacific. We need strong collaboration on this Bill with Pacific partners to develop future solutions.

We are happy to provide more information on the issues raised or to answer any questions the panel may have in relation to our submission. I can be contacted on:

president@anaesthesia.nz

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Kibblewhite".

David Kibblewhite
NZSA President