

Tēnā koe Commissioner Upton,

On behalf of Climate Justice Taranaki, I thank you for your letter to the Ministers of Energy, Climate Change and Finance, cautioning of the multiple issues of green hydrogen for export from Aotearoa New Zealand.

Since 2018, our group has raised serious concerns over the push for a hydrogen economy, notably by key Ministries in central government and industry groups in Taranaki, through formal submissions^{1, 2, 3} and the media^{4, 5}. We are especially concerned when hydrogen (blue then green) is being used to greenwash polluting industries, notably synthetic nitrogen fertiliser production. This is extremely counter-productive at a time when increasing numbers of progressive farmers are beginning to phase out synthetic fertilisers and diversify away from animal agriculture, for the sake of restoring the health of our waterways and people, and a safe climate⁶.

We agree with you totally that the funding and other resources committed to hydrogen represent opportunity loss. Notably, when fast-tracked under the name of covid recovery or regional development, consented hydrogen projects and public funding risk locking us into decades of regret, rather than real climate solutions⁷.

In terms of economics and your point about *“better placed countries with a stronger comparative advantage”*, the IRENA (2022)⁸ report on the geopolitics of hydrogen lists Australia, Chile, Morocco and Spain as examples of countries with *“low cost green hydrogen production that could develop into exporters.”* With Australia’s grand plans and investments into green hydrogen⁹ across multiple states, it is hard to imagine NZ being able to compete at any scale.

In terms of the energy source needed for green hydrogen production, Hiringa Energy in Taranaki has public and private funding to install four towering wind turbines to support their planned projects on ‘green urea’ and hydrogen refueling for heavy transport¹⁰. Looking further into the future, our new energy centre Ara Ake and Taranaki’s regional development agency Venture Taranaki recently hosted the Offshore Future Energy Forum¹¹, with heavy focus on offshore wind and Power to X. The latter is explained by Venture Taranaki’s concept paper¹²:

“It is possible to use large amounts of renewable electricity, such as that generated by offshore wind farms, to produce energy-intensive green products to an international scale. This process is called Power to X and the global export potential for the products may hold the key to not only ensuring a Just Transition (an economic transition that results in fair, equitable and inclusive outcomes) for New Zealand communities but an opportunity for an economic shift.”

¹ <https://climatejusticetaranaki.files.wordpress.com/2019/10/cjt-submission-on-mbie-hydrogen-green-paper-oct19-v3-final.pdf>

² <https://climatejusticetaranaki.files.wordpress.com/2021/06/cjt-submission-to-motransport-hikina-te-kohupara-with-toitu-23jun21.pdf>

³ <https://climatejusticetaranaki.files.wordpress.com/2021/10/cjt-submission-on-covid-19-response-management-measures-legislation-bill-5oct21.pdf>

⁴ <https://climatejusticetaranaki.wordpress.com/2018/11/21/press-release-sustainable-hydrogen-or-oxymoron/>

⁵ <https://climatejusticetaranaki.wordpress.com/2019/03/18/press-release-taranaki-hydrogen-roadmap-smoke-and-mirrors/>

⁶ <https://climatejusticetaranaki.wordpress.com/2020/07/23/press-release-activists-warn-adern-hydrogen-no-path-to-low-carbon-future/>

⁷ <https://climatejusticetaranaki.wordpress.com/2021/10/04/press-release-fast-tracking-hiringa-ballance-kapuni-hydrogen-project-%ef%bf%bc/>

⁸ https://www.irena.org/-/media/Files/IRENA/Agency/Publication/2022/Jan/IRENA_Geopolitics_Hydrogen_2022.pdf

⁹ https://www.cleanstate.org.au/green-hydrogen-exporting-wa-sunshine-to-the-world?gclid=CjwKCAjwiuuRBhBvEiwAFXKaNDAm-vvMQH5iEICSb9KjzwQ_Hen4V4DSViUX_xdLDMMiEiJbn1aCgBoCXvkQAvD_BwE

¹⁰ <https://www.greenhydrogennz.com/>

¹¹ <https://www.araake.co.nz/news-and-events/offshore-future-energy-forum/>

¹² <https://www.venture.org.nz/assets/Power-to-X-Report-Nov-2021.pdf>

As a community-based climate change and social justice organisation, we are extremely concerned about this incessant push for more energy and resource consumption to feed an export economy that is reliant on infinite growth. We see this as absolutely irresponsible when our top priority now is to reduce our collective ecological overshoots and extreme social inequality both in Aotearoa and globally. There is nothing just, fair or equitable about Power to X. On the contrary, it will likely retain corporate power at the expense of real democratic, distributed initiatives that build community resilience in this time of burgeoning crises.

We'd appreciate opportunities to discuss our concerns with you and your team through ongoing dialogues.

Thank you once again for raising the crucial issues around hydrogen at the highest level.

Nāku noa,

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