Climate Adaptation

Election Issue 2026

Weather patterns are getting more extreme and more volatile; extreme weather events cost New Zealanders and the economy a huge amount; fires, floods, and droughts pose a significant risk to homes, infrastructure, and livelihoods; in severe cases, people die.

Human caused climate change is happening. Its effects will continue to get worse, but we are already seeing its impacts every year with extreme weather events that cause suffering to many people and ecosystems. How should Christians respond? Climate adaptation is primarily about how we look after the most vulnerable in our communities. In a rapidly changing and destabilising world, will we leave everyone to fend for themselves, or do we have a responsibility to be "our brother's keeper"?

The material in the following draws on an excellent video resource published by Common Grace Aotearoa: "Adapting to our Unstable Climate". It is part of the *Thriving in this Land* study series for churches and can be found here: https://www.commongrace.nz/thriving

Below you'll find some information about this issue, as well as some accompanying questions, which could be asked of candidates in your electorate.

Managed Retreat

14% of New Zealanders – 750,000 people – live in flood prone areas. Of those, tens of thousands live in areas of high risk. In the event of extreme weather, it is those who are underinsured or uninsured who stand to lose the most.[1]
What will you do to ensure that renters or uninsured homeowners are protected in the event of a natural disaster?

Currently, we lack a really robust, cost-effective, and fair policy framework for responding to climate adaptation, including how costs will be funded.[2]
What will you do to work towards a cross-party funding framework for moving people out of harm's way?

Compensation

The Ministry for the Environment established an expert working group on managed retreat, which recommended that there should be "capped compensation" for people's principal places of residence.[3]

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[1] https://www.growregions.govt.nz/new-funding/regional-infrastructure-fund/flood-resilience-funding
[2] https://www.nbr.co.nz/politics/majority-believe-the-government-should-act-on-climate-adaptation/
[3] https://environment.govt.nz/publications/adapting-to-climate-change-in-new-zealand-recommendations-from-the-climate-change-adaptation-technical-working-group/

Are you committed to the implementation of a "capped compensation" policy or similar?

The Natural Hazards Commission covers flood and storm damage to land, but not to homes.[4]
Will you commit to expanding the Natural Hazards Commission to include principal places of residence?

Global and regional responsibility

Small island, developing States in the Asia-Pacific region face some of the most severe impacts of climate change, despite contributing the least to the problem. Meanwhile New Zealanders contribute disproportionately to climate change on a per capita basis.[5]
What is our responsibility to developing nations in our region, and what does that mean for you?

Currently, New Zealand gives only 11% to 19% of its fair share of the global goal for climate finance agreed by developing countries in 2024.[6]
Will you commit to seeing this percentage increase and, if so, to what level?

[4] https://www.naturalhazards.govt.nz/insurance-and-claims/cover-for-storm-flood-and-landslide-damage/
[5] https://www.iea.org/countries/new-zealand/emissions
[6] https://www.worldvision.org.nz/campaigns/climate-finance-report/