

## **CASE STUDY: A MODEL OF MULTI-SECTORAL ENGAGEMENT ON CLIMATE CHANGE**

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**Case study location:** Aotearoa, New Zealand

**Case study period:** 2005-2016

### **Summary**

Since 2005, a multi-stakeholder programme of Climate Change Roundtables in New Zealand has addressed both international and domestic climate change issues. It is run by the capital-based Victoria University of Wellington, and has an independent chair. It and operates under the Chatham House Rule [what is said may be communicated but not who said it], and participants speak as individuals not as representatives of their organisation. Summaries of each meeting are able to be distributed.

With the evolution of the international negotiations, the focus for climate engagement and responsibility has become increasingly domestic. Currently the roundtable looks to be the nucleus of a more formal and more public climate change forum. By keeping dialogue going in an area of high controversy, the roundtables have led to greater understanding, both of the issues and others' interests. The format is useful for civil society - in that there is direct engagement and dialogue with the main actors, away from the heat of public campaigns. It has had a useful educative value with all the main actors and stakeholders.

### **Background**

The Climate Change Roundtable programme was established in 2005. Its aim is to address key policy issues on climate change for New Zealand both international and domestic. Its genesis was the new round of international negotiations that began in 2005.

The format is around 25 people, present by invitation, including government ministers and opposition members of parliament, local government, academics, business forestry, agriculture, iwi (Maori) and civil society such as environmental and other NGOs. The membership is not fixed, but there has been a good deal of continuity. Climate sceptics are not invited.

A steering committee drawn from participating organisations oversees the programme. Each meeting is around a theme, with a short background paper with some key questions for discussion prepared by the university. There is an independent chair, who is a journalist and political commentator. The roundtables invite people to do what are called "discussion starters", short introductions to the subject, but the focus is on discussion rather than presentations. The output from each roundtable is a summary of the discussions, which can be disseminated by participants as they see fit. They have not shied away from controversial and divisive issues, notably in NZ's case agriculture. Several RTs have focused on aspects of agriculture.

The roundtables have evolved in three directions since their foundation:

- ◆ Its focus has become increasingly domestic
- ◆ It is now funded by participants rather than directly by central government

- ◆ It has kept discussions going during a period of relative inaction by central government – a “pause” in policy development – and consistently with international developments, has demonstrated to government the amount of interest of non-state actors.

Discussions are under way to set up a more formal Climate Change Forum to focus on the issues around New Zealand’s domestic transition to a low carbon economy. Membership of this forum will inevitably include participants in the roundtables, and will benefit from the relationships and mutual understanding that has been built up. If the Forum is established the roundtables will be wrapped up.

## **Conclusions**

The concept has been effective – shown in the willingness of participants to fund the programme.

That it has worked at all is a sign of the importance that people attach to the issue.

It has created a safe environment to discuss difficult issues.

Its educative value has been directly to the main actors in climate change, and indirectly through them to a wider audience. The presence of many different points of view means each person can take back to their organisation a deeper understanding of the issues.

It thus avoids the trap of “la pensee unique” - to which NGOs are susceptible!

It has got away from conflict and slogans

It has given civil society and non-state actors direct access to decision-makers in an informal setting

Finally it has built up relationships of trust among those who are frequently publicly at loggerheads which have a lasting value beyond the RT setting.