

Title: Lessons from the 350 Aotearoa Political engagement experience

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Efforts by successive New Zealand Governments to develop effective climate change policy has divided communities, divided politics and left us with weak measures to reduce NZ's emissions. At the global level, the failure of the Copenhagen negotiations makes it almost unimaginable that we could return the planet to a safe climate (of no more than 350ppm CO₂).

Despite the gloomy outlook, people around the world continue to take action in their local communities with the hope of returning the planet to a concentration of CO₂ of less than 350ppm. Here in New Zealand, the 350 movement was launched on the steps of Parliament in December 2008. From the outset we committed ourselves to building common ground and relationships with politicians, from across the political spectrum. While NZ's commitment to climate change mitigation is still weak, the changes we have contributed to include:

- An increased willingness of MPs from the four major parties to get involved in grass-roots community climate action
- Stronger 2020 emission reduction target than expected: 10-20% (instead of the expected 0-10%)
- Support for 350ppm as a target by the Labour Party and Green Party
- At the recent launch of the UNICEF Climate Kiwis DVD, the Labour climate change spokesperson, Charles Chauvel, who co-hosted the event, commented that he had taken a leaf out of 350's book and invited a National Party MP to co-host the event with him. However small this action was, it reflects a shift to a more collaborative focus on climate change issues by some of the leading politicians.

Two years down the track, we're still a long way off a 350 future, and we don't expect to get there in a hurry. To get us back to 350 requires a comprehensive slowing down of our society. That means breaking our addiction to fossil fuels and economic growth. While conventional polarised campaigning will play an important part in that shift, it has shown itself to be insufficient. Thus, we have attempted a non-conventional approach to campaigning, with our non-polarising, relationship-building and fun strategy.