How New Zealand Media Tells the Climate Story

How climate costs are explained, separated and assigned

A report for climate journalists and editors

**A WICKED PROBLEM IN WHICH EVERY COST IS RESISTED,
EVERY RESPONSIBILITY CONTESTED, AND ACCOUNTABILITY REMAINS OBLIQUE.**

Prepared July 2026

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Executive summary

This report examines how New Zealand political media told the climate story from June 2023 to July 2026. It begins with a simple problem of comparison. When new technology, levy, emissions rule or public investment is described as expensive, what is that price being compared with?

I. The central finding

New Zealand media made many individual climate costs visible, but much less often assembled them into a connected account of what New Zealand pays now, what it may pay later, and who carries the consequences of delay.

Coverage followed the climate problem unevenly. Mitigation and climate policy received the greatest sustained visibility. Weather events and recovery produced sharp bursts of attention. Adaptation and resilience were much less prominent. This matters because the four parts of the problem are financially connected: reducing emissions, preparing for effects, experiencing damage and paying for recovery are not separate choices, even when they appear in separate headlines.

The report does not argue that journalists ignored climate change, nor that criticism of policy costs was misplaced. Scrutiny of the ETS, methane targets, subsidies, infrastructure proposals and government performance is necessary. The issue is cumulative. Immediate policy costs were often concrete and contestable; the economic consequences those policies were intended to avoid remained more diffuse.

II. What the coverage showed

- Climate was a significant but secondary topic within the wider political agenda, well behind the economy, local government, politics and health.
- Headline volume rose around weather events, international meetings and policy triggers, but a spike in event coverage did not necessarily become sustained reporting on vulnerability, adaptation or prevention.
- Different media supplied different parts of the story. High-volume reporting, specialist policy coverage, analysis and commentary were distributed unevenly across the media system.
- Mitigation was reported through several mechanisms - the ETS, Paris targets, agricultural emissions policy, energy transition, corporate commitments, disclosure rules and climate litigation - but these were usually presented as separate disputes rather than as one national strategy.
- Farming coverage made both the cost of climate policy to farmers and the cost of climate effects on farming visible, but **almost never compared the two**.
- Insurance and local government exposed the allocation problem most clearly: physical risk was recognised, yet responsibility moved among households, insurers, councils, ratepayers and central government.

- Among 242 reviewed headlines that specified a climate-related cost, 167 concerned mitigation and policy, 57 damage and recovery, and 18 adaptation and resilience. Only five explicitly framed the cost of inaction.
- The final cost review found that prices were frequently stated without an equally visible explanation of purpose, avoided loss or the comparison between acting and not acting.

III. The opportunity for journalism

The opportunity is not simply to publish more climate stories. It is to connect stories that are already being reported: link a flood to vulnerability and adaptation; link a recovery package to earlier prevention choices; link a mitigation price to the risk it is intended to reduce; link sectoral losses to productivity, public finances and long-term economic resilience; and revisit announcements to test implementation and effectiveness

Purpose and approach

The idea for this report began with an interview about a hydrogen-powered train recently commissioned in India. The interviewer's first question was a familiar and reasonable one: how much did it cost? Much of the discussion then focused on the train's price and whether the investment was justified. What received far less attention was the other side of the comparison: the current and future costs of climate change that technologies such as this are intended to reduce.

That imbalance prompted a wider question. When New Zealand media reports on climate mitigation - carbon pricing, methane targets, energy transition, public subsidies or new infrastructure - how often are the costs of acting made visible? And how often are they compared with the costs of delay: flood recovery, drought, damaged roads, insurance pressure, lost production and repeated public spending?

This report examines whether the two sides of the climate equation are presented together or appear as separate, disconnected stories.

The report works from headline-level evidence. Headlines reveal what was made immediately visible to readers, but they cannot establish everything contained in the full article, what audiences believed, or whether a policy was objectively good or bad. The analysis therefore asks a narrower question: what public narrative did the headline record create when viewed across three years?

What we are told

1. Climate in the wider news agenda

Climate did not sit at the centre of New Zealand political coverage. In the broad parent-category comparison, the economy, local government, politics and health all generated several times more headlines. Climate was nevertheless large enough to be a recurring national story, and its effects repeatedly entered topics counted elsewhere: housing, energy, agriculture, insurance, transport, infrastructure and local government.

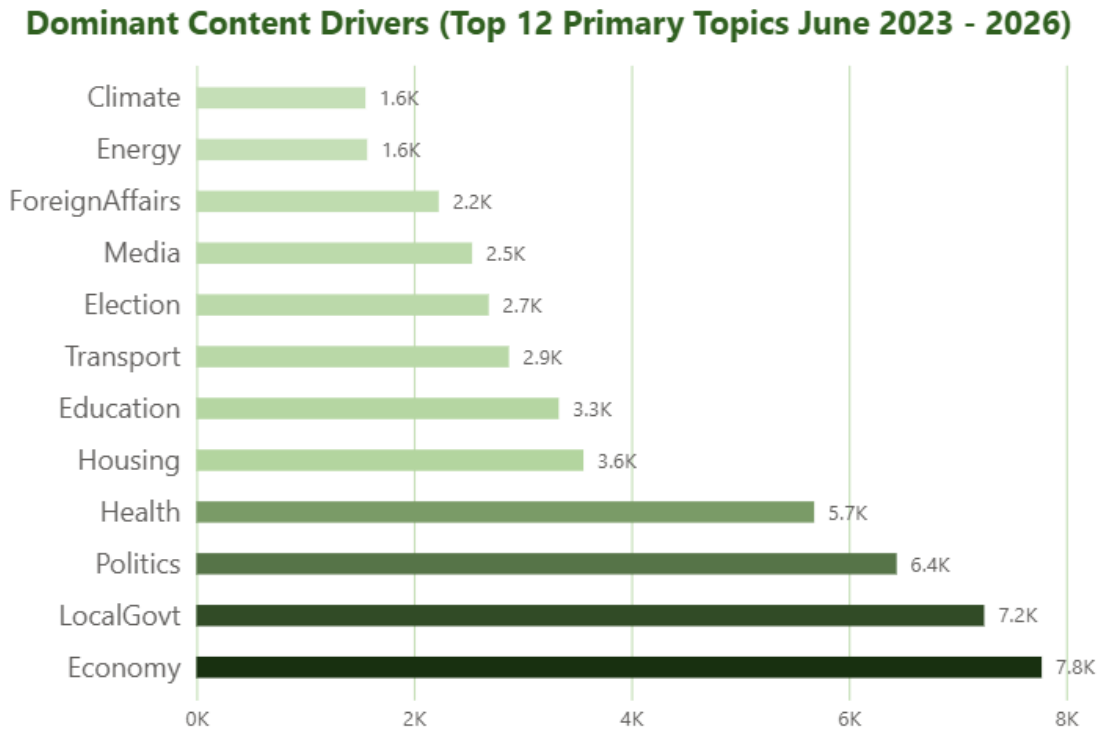


Figure 1. Climate was visible, but well below the largest political topics.
(Topic-category counts do not capture every climate-relevant story coded under another policy area)

This distinction is important. A climate story can disappear statistically when it is reported as a road failure, an insurance premium, a farm loss, a council buyout or an electricity problem. The issue is not merely how often the word climate appears. It is whether readers are helped to recognise the climate dimension of costs that arrive through other systems.

The economy offers the clearest opportunity. Climate damage was often reported as a cost to a property owner, council, insurer, farmer or damaged asset, but much less often assembled into a wider account of productivity, fiscal exposure, investment, trade and long-term growth. The economic effects of climate change were visible mainly as separate bills and sectoral losses rather than as one cumulative economic risk.

A damaged road, an insurance claim, a farm support package and a council recovery bill can each be accurately reported. The missing step is to show when they are parts of the same economic problem.

2. The climate story moved in bursts, not as a continuous chain

Climate change reaches the public through four linked stages: reducing the cause, preparing for effects, experiencing the event and paying for damage. The media did not give each stage equal or continuous attention.

Stage	What becomes visible
Reducing the cause	ETS, emissions targets, methane policy, energy transition, corporate obligations
Preparing for effects	Adaptation, resilience, flood protection, managed retreat, insurance planning
Experiencing the event	Floods, storms, drought, slips and immediate physical impacts
Paying for damage	Recovery, rebuilding, claims, property buyouts and public assistance

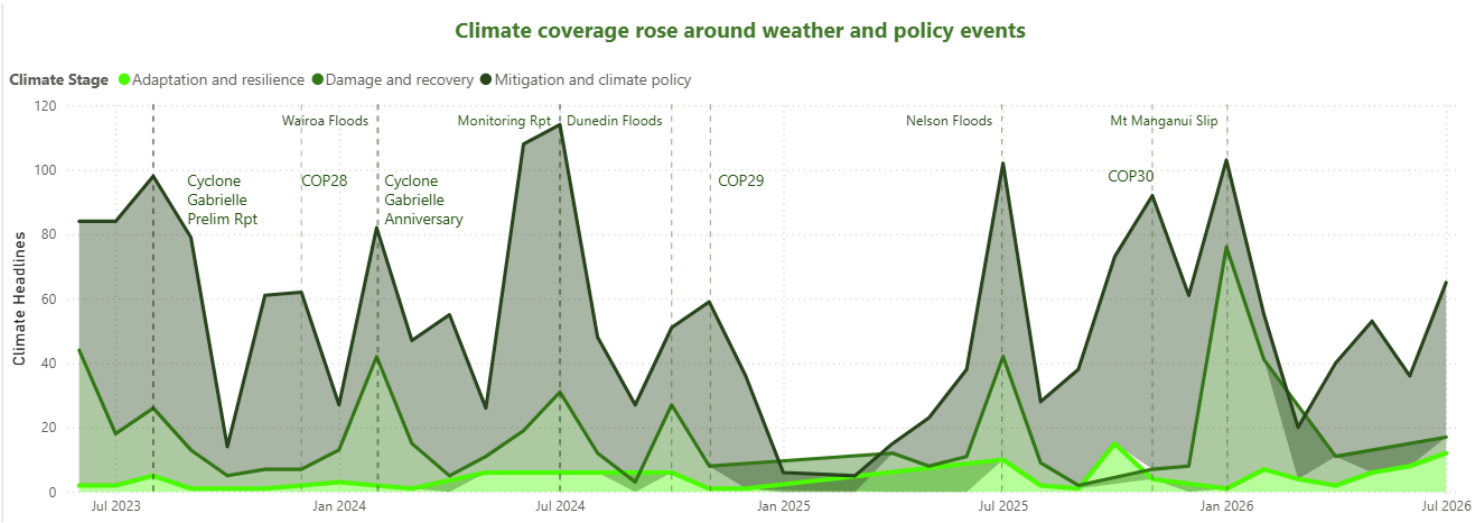


Figure 2. Monthly headline volume rose around weather and policy events. The chart shows visibility, not causation; several events and policy triggers coincided with sharp increases.

The graph shows an episodic public narrative. Weather events, reports, anniversaries and international meetings produced visible peaks, but the pathway did not automatically continue

from event to vulnerability, from vulnerability to adaptation, or from adaptation to mitigation. A flood may dominate the news without climate change becoming equally visible as an explanatory or policy frame. A policy announcement may generate a spike followed by little reporting on implementation or effectiveness.

3. Different media supplied different parts of the narrative

No single media organisation supplied the whole climate story. RNZ carried the largest volume and made damage and recovery more visible than most. Newsroom, BusinessDesk and NBR concentrated heavily on mitigation and policy. Interest gave adaptation and resilience a larger share. The Conversation and The Spinoff produced fewer headlines but a much higher share of analysis.

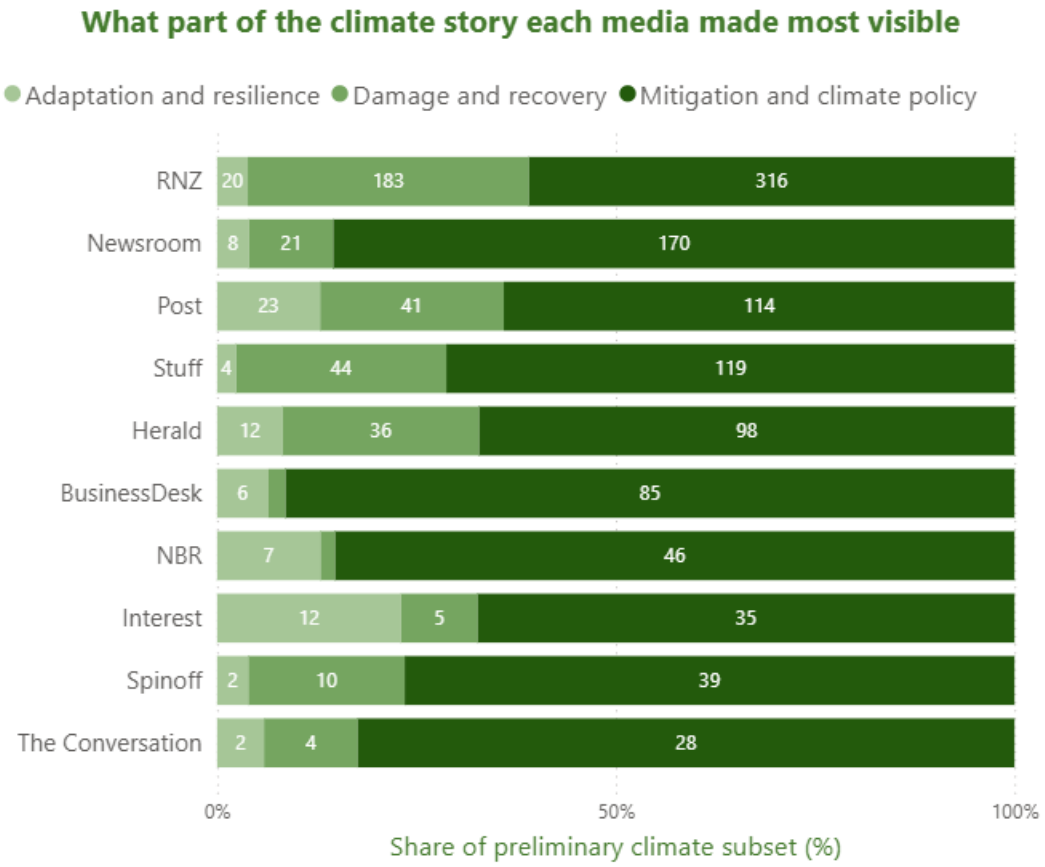


Figure 3. The balance among mitigation, damage and adaptation differed markedly by media organisation. Counts are shown inside the bars to prevent percentage shares from concealing volume.

These differences are not a league table. They reflect distinct editorial functions, audiences and business models. High-volume reporting provides continuity and regional visibility.

Specialist media follow institutions, markets and implementation. Analysis and commentary explain mechanisms, contest assumptions and interpret consequences.

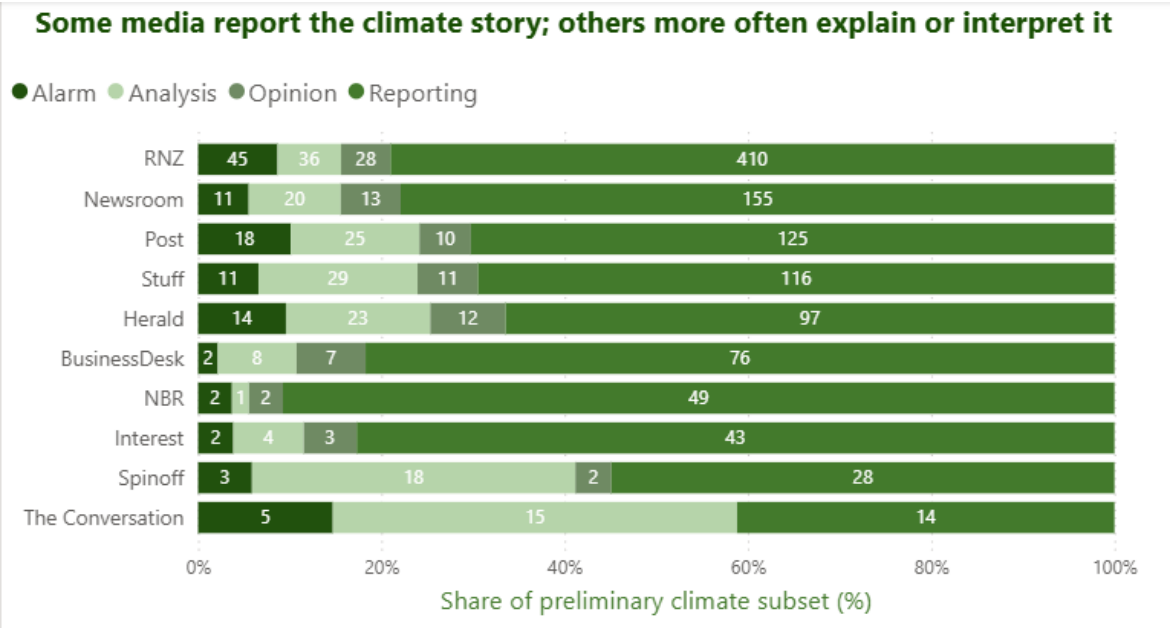


Figure 4. Reporting dominated most media profiles, while The Conversation and The Spinoff devoted a larger share to analysis. Volume and explanation are different contributions to the public narrative.

The result is an information environment in which **a reader's understanding depends partly on which media they encounter.**

One publication may reveal the policy mechanism, another the affected community, another the market response and another the legal or scientific context.

The climate narrative is distributed across the media system rather than assembled in one place.

The stage comparison adds another layer. Damage and recovery were reported predominantly as events and consequences, while adaptation and resilience - although much less visible overall - carried a larger relative share of analysis. The pattern suggests that the least visible stage is also the one that most often requires explanation of uncertainty, trade-offs, planning and longtime horizons.

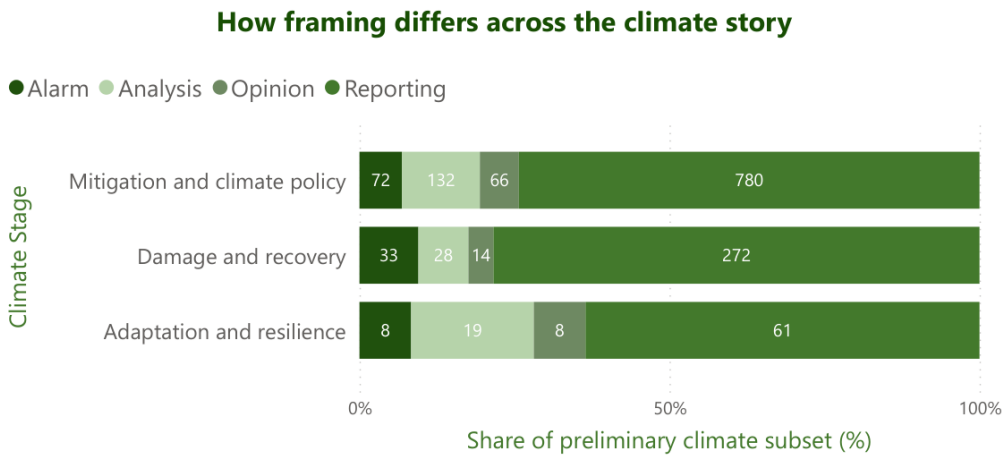


Figure 5. Framing differed by climate stage. Damage and recovery were especially reporting-led, while adaptation and resilience had a larger relative share of analysis despite its much smaller headline volume.

The gap is not necessarily inside each individual article. It can emerge between articles, between media and across time.

4. Mitigation was visible - often through conflict, failure and contested obligation

I. Emissions trading scheme (ETS)

Mitigation received the largest share of climate coverage, but that does not mean New Zealanders were given a coherent account of how emissions would be reduced.

The mitigation story spanned carbon pricing, international targets, agricultural methane, corporate commitments, disclosure, energy policy, forestry, protests, and legal action.

The **ETS** was especially visible in failed auctions, revenue gaps, court decisions, administrative costs, forestry settings, and arguments over **whether agriculture should be included.**

This is necessary accountability reporting. A central mitigation mechanism should be tested against whether it works.

The cumulative frame of the mitigation narrative was often one of instability, cost and failure rather than a connected explanation of the role the mechanism was intended to play.

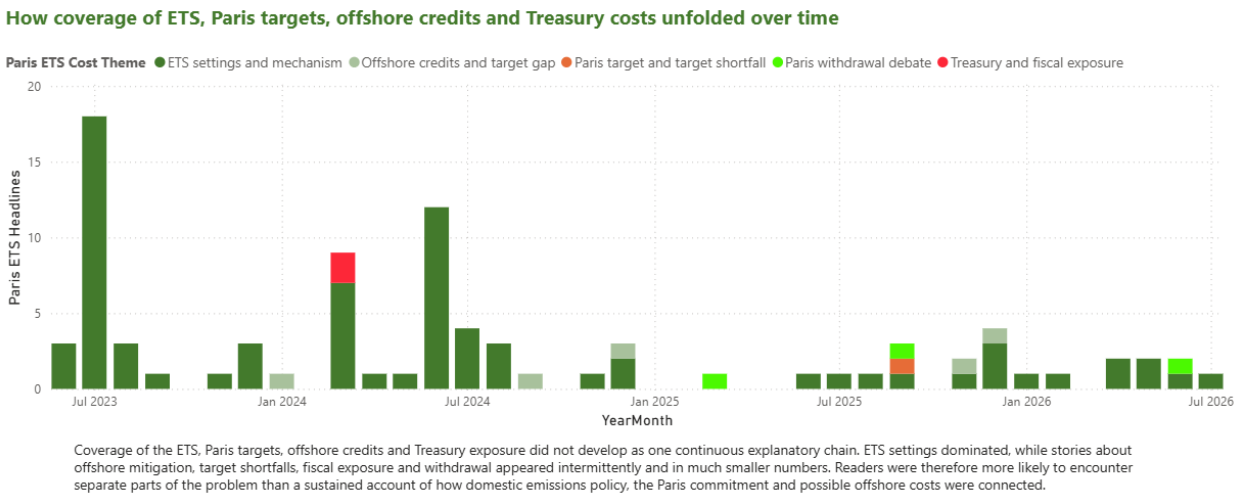


Figure 6. Coverage of the ETS, Paris targets, offshore credits and Treasury exposure appeared in separate episodes. ETS settings dominated; the connecting parts of the chain were intermittent and much smaller.

The timeline matters because these subjects form one policy chain. Domestic emissions performance affects the **Paris Agreement** commitment. A target gap may create pressure to buy offshore credits. Treasury may estimate fiscal exposure.

Readers were more likely to encounter these issues **separately** than as a sustained account of how domestic settings, international commitments and future liabilities connected.

II. The “reduce or offset” emissions debate

Forestry added another layer to the contested mitigation story. Headlines questioned whether New Zealand was relying too heavily on trees, particularly on exotic plantation forestry, to offset emissions rather than reducing them at the source.

Coverage presented forestry as both an essential carbon-removal tool and a politically easier pathway: ETS settings could encourage planting and improve the national emissions balance without imposing the same immediate constraints on transport, farming or fossil-fuel use. But the apparent solution created further disputes over whole-farm conversions, productive land, rural communities, wildfire risk, native versus exotic forests and the permanence of stored carbon.

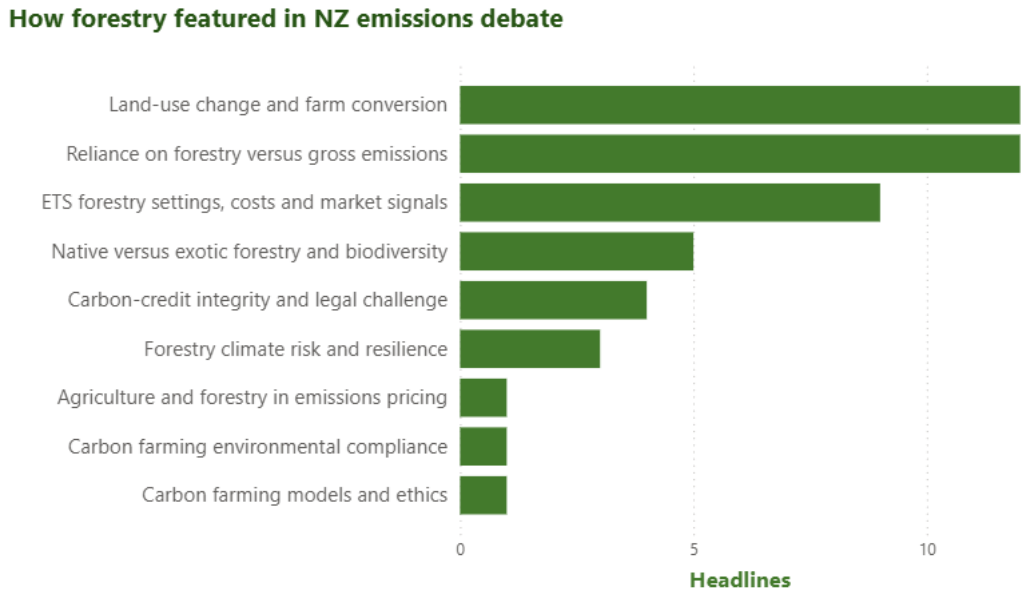


Figure 7. Forestry coverage centred on two linked tensions: the conversion of productive land to carbon forestry, and reliance on tree planting to offset emissions rather than reduce them at source. ETS settings and market incentives formed the next-largest strand, while biodiversity, carbon-credit integrity and climate resilience received less attention.

The unanswered question was therefore not whether trees have a role, but what proportion of New Zealand's pathway depended on genuine emissions reductions and what proportion depended on offsetting them through land-use change.

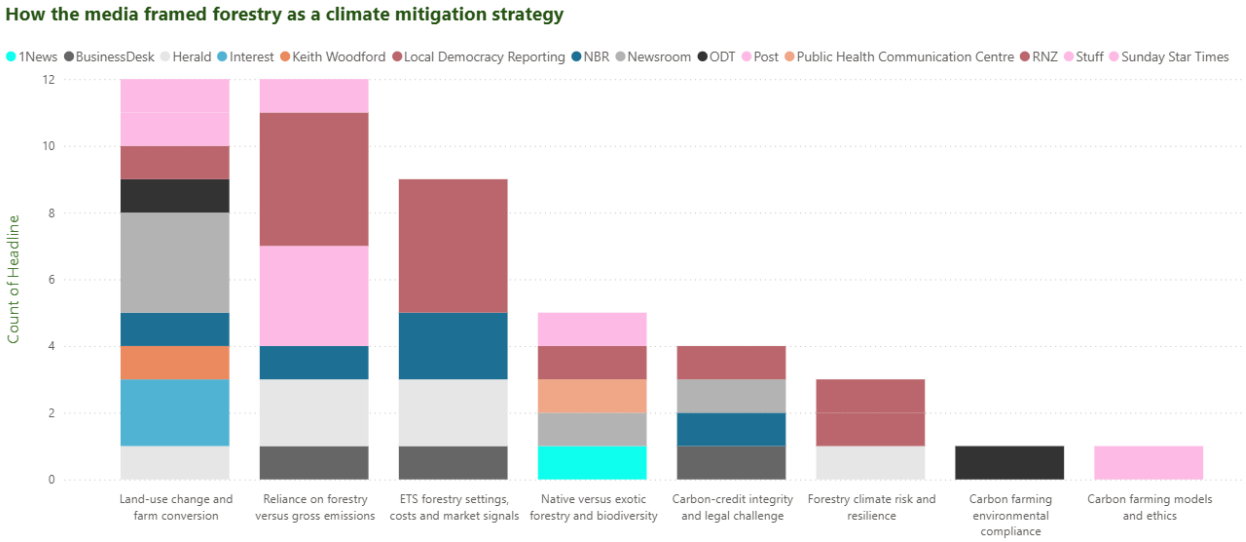


Figure 8. Coverage of forestry as a mitigation strategy was spread across several media organisations, but the emphasis was concentrated in three areas: farm conversion and land-use change, reliance on forestry offsets rather than gross emissions reductions, and the ETS settings that shaped market incentives. The pattern shows that forestry was not presented as a simple solution; it was framed as a contested policy choice involving rural production, carbon accounting, biodiversity and the credibility of New Zealand's wider emissions pathway

As with other climate mechanisms, the individual controversies were visible, while the balance between reducing gross emissions and compensating for them through forestry was less consistently presented as a single public account.

5. Independent advice was visible mainly when government contested it

The Climate Change Commission occupies an important position in the climate story. It is intended to provide an independent test of whether New Zealand's targets, emissions budgets and policies are consistent with one another. Yet the Commission appeared most prominently in headlines when its advice was being challenged, rejected, or bypassed.

The headline record included:

- "Govt sidelines Climate Commission in seeking do-over of advice" — Newsroom
- "Methane inquiry a 'vote of no confidence' in climate commission" — BusinessDesk
- "Climate Change Commission's ETS advice 'not gospel,' says Willis" — NBR
- "Govt considers sidelining Climate Change Commission from emissions advice" — 1News
- "Government rejects all of Climate Change Commission's emissions target recommendations" — RNZ

Budget reporting also identified reductions in the Commission's planned funding and work, including the removal of some anticipated responsibilities relating to agricultural emissions. The more significant pattern, however, was not simply a smaller budget. It was the combination of reduced work, the commissioning of alternative advice, and ministers increasingly disputing or rejecting the Commission's recommendations.

Governments are entitled to disagree with independent advice. Disagreement creates a further journalistic question: what evidence replaces it? If the Government rejects the Commission's assessment of the emissions pathway, readers need to know what alternative modelling was used, whether it is publicly available and whether it tests the full effect of the Government's policy package rather than each decision separately.

The Commission's 2026 monitoring report concluded that changes to the statutory target now allow higher greenhouse-gas emissions while still satisfying the revised 2050 framework. Its national risk assessment also identifies decision-making and funding capacity as significant climate risks.

The media reported individual disputes over the Commission's advice, but much less often assembled them into a sustained examination of how the Government's overall pathway was being independently tested.

Mitigation also extended beyond the ETS and Paris Agreement. The Mike Smith litigation produced two distinct waves of coverage. In early 2024, the Supreme Court allowed a claim against seven major emitters to proceed. In 2026, the Government moved to restrict this form of climate litigation. Across the two periods, 41 headlines recorded a contest over whether responsibility for climate harm should sit with emitters through the courts, with Parliament through legislation, with government through policy, or with the wider public through adaptation and recovery.

The litigation did not prove that the claims would succeed, nor that courts are the best climate-policy instrument. Its significance for the media narrative is different: while climate damage and future costs became more visible, one possible route for assigning responsibility to emitters was itself being contested.

Government struggle is therefore part of the story. Every mitigation instrument allocates cost or obligation. Carbon pricing affects firms and consumers. Methane policy affects farm production and land use. Energy transition affects investment and prices. Disclosure affects companies and financial markets. Litigation affects legal exposure. Resistance does not necessarily reflect denial of climate risk; it often reflects disagreement about who should act first, how fast, and who should absorb the immediate cost.

6. Farming shows why the problem is difficult to govern

Farming makes the political difficulty unusually clear. The sector is both a significant source of emissions and highly exposed to drought, flooding, storm damage and changing markets. It is asked to reduce risk while already experiencing risk.

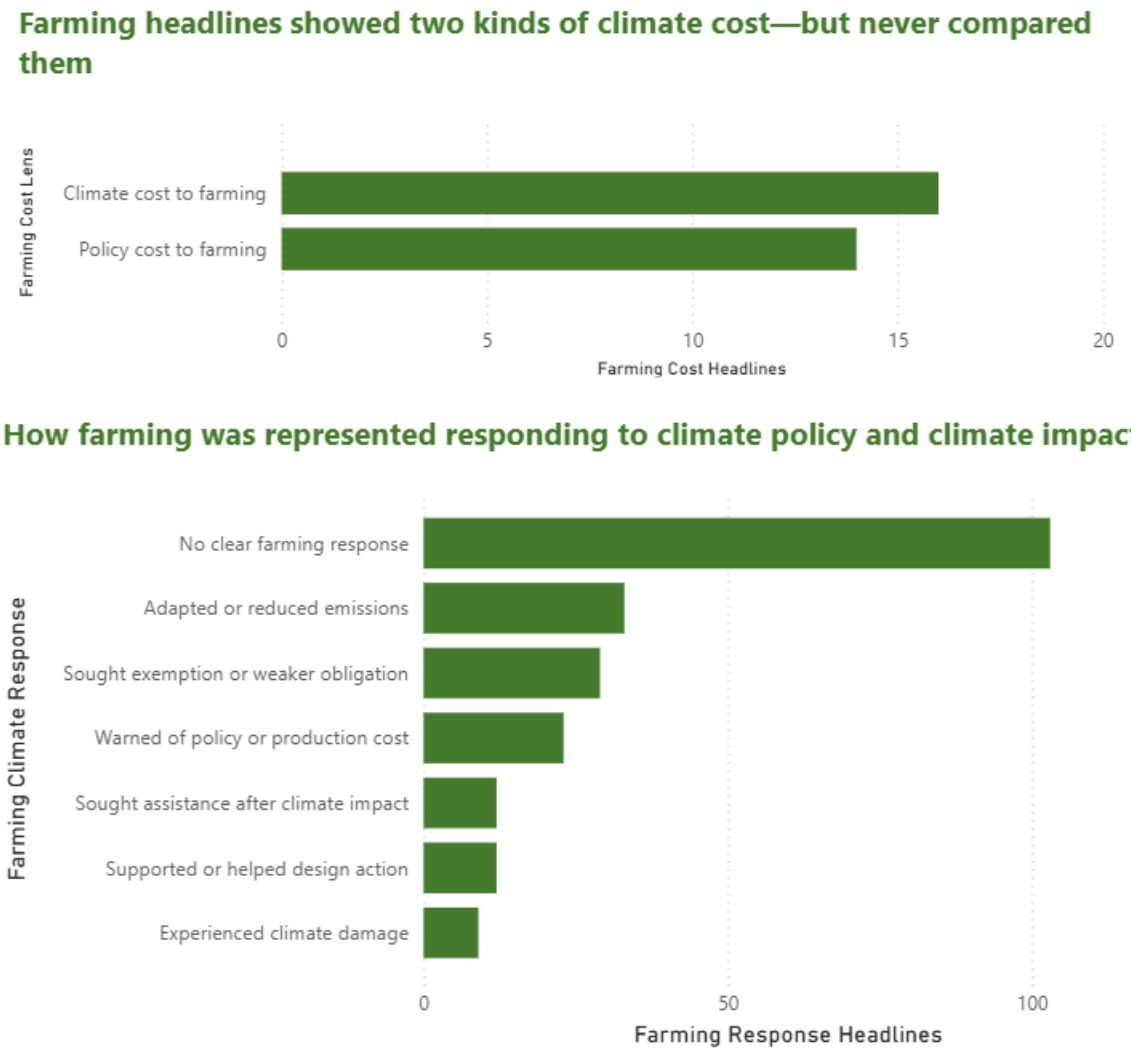


Figure 9. Farming coverage showed both the cost of climate impacts and the cost of climate policy, but the two were not directly compared. The broader response coding shows adaptation, participation, resistance, exposure and requests for assistance.

The evidence does not support a simple claim that farmers only resisted action. Headlines showed farmers adapting practices, reducing emissions, supporting or helping design policy, and experiencing climate damage. They also showed requests for exemptions or weaker obligations, warnings about production costs and appeals for assistance after climate impacts.

These positions can be rational from the perspective of an individual farm. A farmer may face real compliance costs today and real flood or drought losses tomorrow. The contradiction appears at the system level: the same sector can resist the costs of reducing emissions while seeking public assistance for climate-related damage, yet coverage rarely places those two claims side by side.

The key journalistic question is not whether farmers are for or against climate action. It is how the costs of transition, exposure and public assistance are related - and whether the policy pathway makes that relationship visible.

7. Insurance and local government: risk recognised, responsibility displaced

If farming reveals the political challenge of mitigation, insurance reveals the financial logic of adaptation. Insurers are not simply increasing premiums in isolation. They are pricing rising physical risk, restricting cover where losses become predictable, and warning that some properties may become difficult or impossible to insure. They also press the government and councils to invest in resilience and to clarify who will bear future losses.

I. Responsibility was assigned more readily than funding

The National Adaptation Framework begins to formalise how New Zealand will identify risks, prepare local adaptation plans and make decisions about exposed communities and infrastructure. Its four pillars include roles and responsibilities, investment in risk reduction and cost-sharing before and after climate events. It also anticipates legislation requiring councils to produce adaptation plans in priority areas. But the framework did not establish a settled national formula for funding those responsibilities. Further decisions were left to follow.

The headline sequence shows that this unresolved question persisted over several years:

Date	Headline	Media
June 2024	The multi-billion climate adaptation fund idea explained	*The Post*
August 2024	Another problem coming to your rates bill: Climate adaptation and managed retreat	*The Post*
October 2024	Select committee fails to clarify who should pay for climate adaptation	*Newsroom*
July 2025	"Financial bomb for the country": Who will pay for the climate adaptation measures?	*Interest*
July 2025	Climate adaptation will involve huge costs	*Interest*
October 2025	Long-awaited climate adaptation plan leaves "who pays" unanswered	*Newsroom*
October 2025	Who pays for adaptation's a "tough" conversation — Climate Change Minister	*Interest*

Date	Headline	Media
April 2026	"Urgency" needed over climate adaptation funding, Insurance Council says	*RNZ*
May 2026	Treading Water: Flood maps, managed retreat and cost-sharing for storm-damaged homes	*The Post*
July 2026	Editorial: Who pays as the storms worsen?	*The Post*

These headlines make the burden framing highly visible.

Climate adaptation appeared as:

- a future rates bill,
- a financial bomb,
- a huge cost and
- a difficult conversation.

It shows that the problem was not a lack of awareness. Journalists repeatedly asked who should pay. What remained less visible was a durable answer.

Local Councils may be expected to map hazards, prepare adaptation plans, strengthen infrastructure and engage communities about retreat, while relying on ratepayers whose ability to meet those costs varies substantially across the country.

Central government may contribute after major events but has resisted becoming the automatic funder for every exposed asset.

Insurers can price or withdraw from risk but cannot finance public infrastructure or determine how communities should relocate.

Homeowners may carry the loss in property value but have limited ability to reduce area-wide hazards.

The **Climate Change Commission's 2026** national risk assessment identifies growing pressure on both central and local government finances as one of New Zealand's most significant climate risks. It notes that many councils already face constrained budgets or debt limits, while climate change will increase spending on recovery, infrastructure and long-term adaptation and may simultaneously weaken tax and rates revenue.

It also reports that approximately 97% of government natural-hazard expenditure since 2010 has gone to response and recovery, compared with 3% for risk reduction and resilience.

The coverage therefore exposed an important contradiction:

Local government was being given a longer planning horizon, but not yet the secure financial settlement required to act across that horizon.

Reasons not to pay

Government faces the opposite pressure. It is expected to protect communities and fund recovery, but it resists becoming the default insurer for private property or accepting an unlimited obligation after every event.

Councils face infrastructure, flood protection, planning and buyout responsibilities, but ratepayers resist the scale of the cost. Homeowners resist unaffordable premiums and loss of property value. Insurers resist carrying risks that public policy has not reduced.

Coverage records each institutional position. Taken together, it shows a system in which the risk is acknowledged, but responsibility repeatedly moves elsewhere.

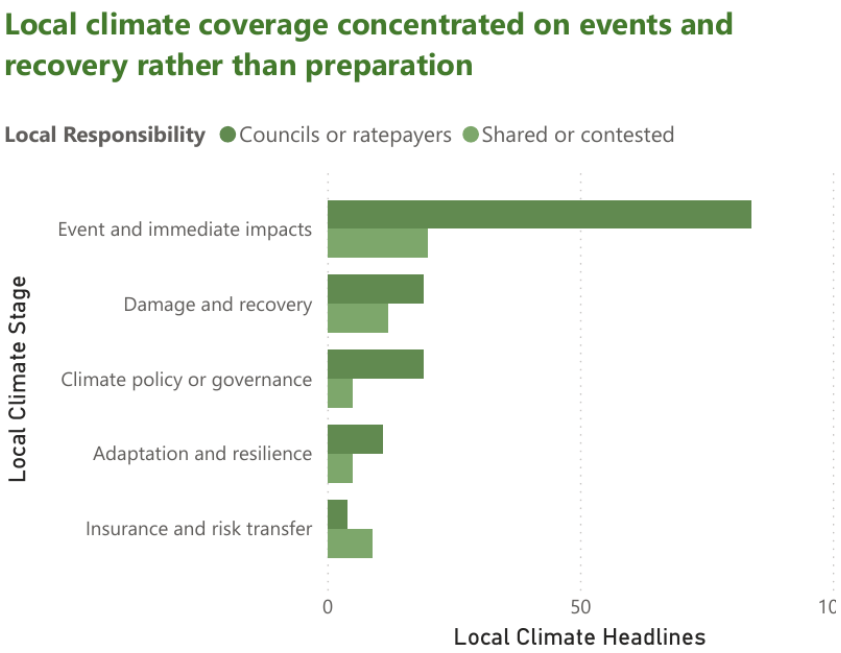


Figure 10. In the reviewed local-government subset, events and immediate impacts dominated. Damage and recovery were more visible than adaptation, resilience or insurance and risk transfer.

II. Local government

This is where national climate risk becomes a practical argument about rates, roads, drainage, flood protection, managed retreat and property buyouts.

Across 188 reviewed climate headlines involving local government,

- 137 placed responsibility principally on councils or ratepayers, while
- 51 presented it as shared, contested or unresolved.

The point is not that councils were wrongly held responsible. It is that a national climate problem was repeatedly translated into local obligations without responsibility settling clearly across central government, councils, insurers and property owners. This is the wicked problem in institutional form.

Every possible allocation is resisted: higher rates, higher premiums, new levies, stricter planning controls, public buyouts, private losses or open-ended central-government guarantees. The absence of agreement does not remove the cost. It delays or redistributes it.

Together, insurance retreat, council planning obligations and unresolved cost-sharing show how responsibility can become clearer on paper while remaining unsettled in financial practice.

8. The climate-cost contradiction

The final review returned to the question that began the report: when a cost is made visible, what is it being compared with?

Among 242 reviewed headlines that explicitly specified a climate-related cost, 167 concerned mitigation and policy, 57 damage and recovery, and 18 adaptation and resilience. Only five explicitly framed the cost of inaction. This does not mean the physical cost of climate change appeared in only five stories. Flood losses, insurance claims, farm damage and recovery packages were visible elsewhere. It means that very few headlines made the comparative argument explicit: **this is what acting costs, and this is what not acting may cost**.

The distinction is crucial. A price can be highly visible without being intelligible. A subsidy, levy, premium, buyout or infrastructure investment may appear large when reported alone. Its significance depends on what it is intended to achieve, **who benefits, who pays, what risk it reduces and what alternative loss may arise if the action is not taken.**

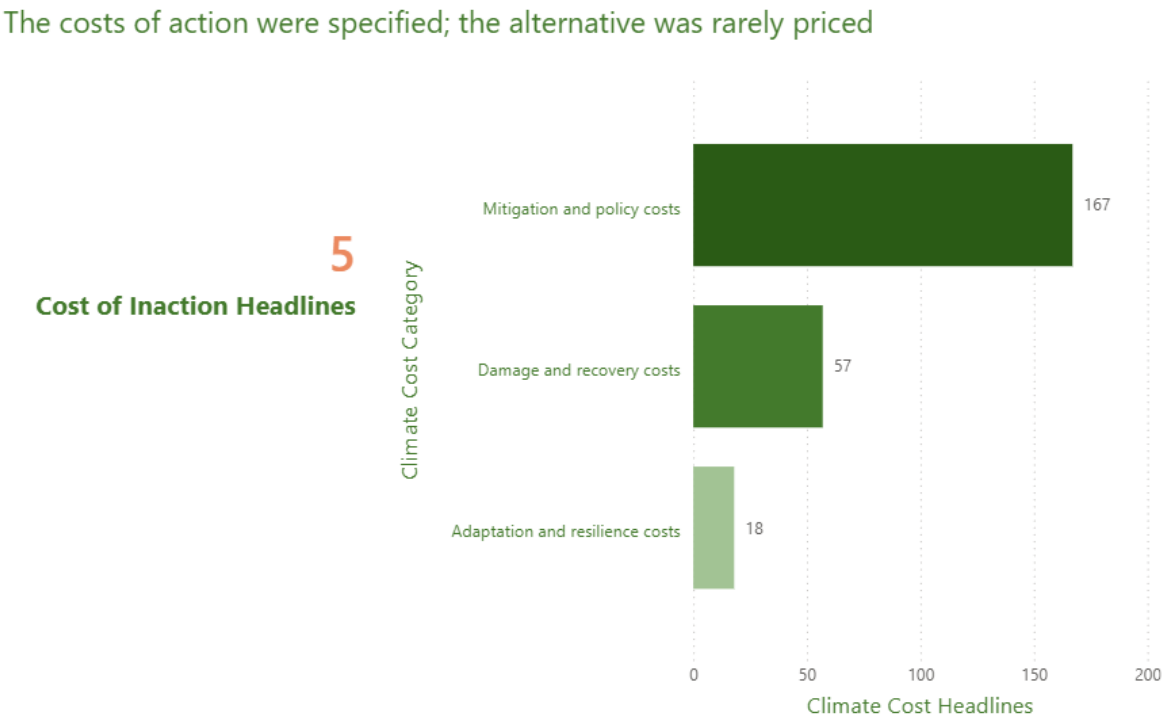


Figure 10. Climate-related costs were most often made explicit when attached to mitigation and policy, while damage, recovery and adaptation costs appeared much less frequently. Only five headlines directly framed the cost of inaction, showing that the immediate price of acting was far more visible than the financial consequences of delay.

I. Asymmetry

This is the asymmetry at the centre of the report. The immediate price of a policy, levy, subsidy or recovery package can be counted and contested. The alternative cost - future damage, repeated disruption, lost production or higher adaptation needs - is less often given an equally concrete form.

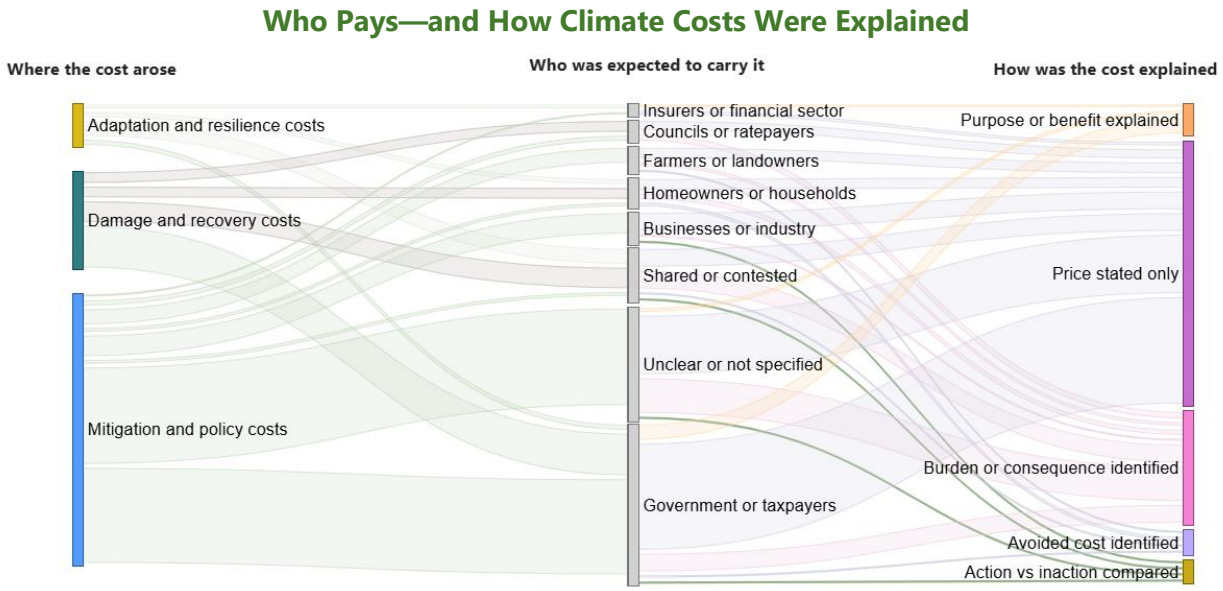


Figure 10. The final accountability Sankey links the type of climate cost, the expected payer and the depth of explanation in the headline. Most flows ended at "price stated only"; direct action-versus-inaction comparisons were rare.

The Sankey shows three features of the narrative:

- First, mitigation and policy costs were the most frequently specified.
- Second, government or taxpayers were the most visible identified payer, while many headlines left the payer unclear or contested.
- Third, the dominant explanatory endpoint was "price stated only". Much smaller flows explained purpose or benefit, identified an avoided cost, or directly compared action with inaction.

This does not make a headline deficient simply because it states a price. Headlines are compressed and articles may contain the missing context. But across hundreds of headlines, the pattern matters. Repeatedly stating the immediate price of action **without equally visible comparison can make mitigation look like an optional new burden**, while recovery appears later as an unavoidable response to an unrelated event.

The macroeconomic connection is similarly weak. Individual losses were visible - damaged roads, farm production, insurance claims, council debt, recovery packages and property buyouts - but these were much less often connected to productivity, public finances, investment,

employment, trade and economic resilience. New Zealanders were shown many bills, but less often the balance sheet.

Climate effects are not free. The public choice is not whether to pay, but when, how, for what purpose and through which institution the cost is carried.

9. Opportunities for climate journalists and editors

The evidence does not point to one missing story. It points to missing connections between stories that are already being reported. Those connections are editorial opportunities.

I. Ask "compared with what?"

When a policy, technology or resilience project is described as expensive, identify the relevant comparator: another technology, continued fossil-fuel use, higher future emissions, expected physical damage, insurance withdrawal, lost production or later recovery. The comparison need not produce a simple answer, but it gives readers a basis for judging the price.

II. Follow the event beyond the event

Build follow-up into event coverage. After the immediate damage, return to vulnerability, preparation, adaptation and mitigation. Ask which earlier decisions increased or reduced exposure and whether the recovery restored the previous risk or changed it.

III. Connect sectoral losses to the economy

Treat repeated road repairs, farm losses, insurance pressure, council debt and property buyouts as potential macroeconomic evidence, not only local or sectoral stories. Ask what cumulative climate exposure means for productivity, public finances, investment and regional development.

IV. Make the allocation of responsibility explicit

Where a cost is disputed, identify the competing allocation models. Should the cost sit with emitters, consumers, taxpayers, ratepayers, insurers, property owners or future governments? Who benefits from each model, and what behaviour does it encourage?

V. Separate scrutiny of a mechanism from judgement of the objective

An ETS auction can fail, a subsidy can be poorly designed and a target can be missed without invalidating the objective of reducing emissions. Distinguishing mechanism failure from policy purpose allows rigorous accountability without leaving readers with the impression that every mitigation route is inherently futile or unaffordable.

VI. Treat implementation as a continuing story

Return to climate plans after the announcement. What was funded? Which institution is responsible? What workforce, infrastructure or regulatory capacity is required? What has changed, and what evidence shows whether the policy is working?

VII. Show the whole chain when possible

The strongest climate reporting can connect cause, preparation, impact and recovery in one frame. Not every story can do this, but editorial planning across a newsroom can ensure that the full chain becomes visible over time.

Conclusion: from separate burdens to a connected public choice

New Zealand media reported many parts of the climate problem accurately and persistently. It reported emissions policy, failed auctions, methane disputes, corporate obligations, litigation, insurance pressure, floods, damaged infrastructure, property buyouts, farm losses and recovery packages. The weakness was not silence. It was separation.

Mitigation appeared as a policy and cost dispute. Adaptation appeared as a council, planning or insurance problem. Extreme weather appeared as an event. Recovery appeared as a funding decision. The connections among them were much less consistently visible.

That fragmentation mirrors the political reality. Government struggles to secure change because each mechanism creates an immediate, identifiable cost for someone. Farmers, businesses, households, councils and insurers each have reasons to resist the burden placed on them. The central government is expected to coordinate the response but resists taking responsibility for every private and local loss. Accountability therefore remains oblique: recognised everywhere, settled nowhere.

Journalism cannot solve that allocation problem. It can, however, make the trade-offs more intelligible. It can show that resisting one cost does not remove it, that paying later is still paying, and that the consequences of delay may arrive through a different institution and under a different headline.

The line climate journalism should keep asking

When the cost of climate action is presented, what is it being compared with - and who carries the alternative if the action is not taken?

Method and limitations

10. Dataset

The analysis draws on a preliminary climate-related subset of 2,015 headlines from a wider SocialHerds dataset of New Zealand political-media headlines published between June 2023 and July 2026. The dataset contains 75,000 political-media headlines drawn from Bryce Edwards' News Briefings between June 2023 and July 2026.

11. Analysis

The preliminary subset was based on climate, extreme weather, and Cyclone Gabrielle classifications, and was then extended through targeted reviews of climate costs, farming, insurance, local government, ETS, and Paris-related themes.

Additional coding fields were created for climate stage, cost category, payer, explanation depth, farming response, insurance framing, local government responsibility, and selected mitigation themes. Coding was rule-assisted and manually reviewed, with small analytically important categories checked headline by headline. The analysis describes what was explicit in headlines, not necessarily everything contained in the article.

Headline analysis can show visibility, framing, sequencing and which elements of an argument reached the headline. It cannot establish readership, belief, causal effects on public opinion, the full balance of an article, or whether a policy was objectively effective. Event markers show temporal coincidence rather than causation. Media comparisons with small samples should be interpreted cautiously.

The report's conclusions are therefore framed as patterns in the public headline record and opportunities for editorial connection, not as judgements on the intent or quality of individual journalists.