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**From:** Barb & Gus King [SMTP:b.a.king@bigpond.com]  
**Sent:** Friday, August 25, 2000 12:19 AM  
**To:** jsct@aph.gov.au  
**Subject:** Comments on the Inquiry into the Kyoto Protocol

The Secretary  
Joint Standing Committee on Treaties

re: Comments on the Inquiry into the Kyoto Protocol

Dear sir/madam

I would like the Committee to be aware of the following comments on the implications of the Kyoto Protocol for Australia.

- Australia should most definitely ratify the Kyoto Protocol. If anything we should aim to reduce our target emission levels to well below those agreed to within the Protocol. I believe Australia's position at the Kyoto Summit and the outcome of allowing an increase in Greenhouse Gas Emissions has damaged rather than enhanced our environmental credentials. The only way we can rectify this is by actual performance rather than rhetoric. We are well behind many other developed nations in pursuing improvements in energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy supplies. We can make such adjustments to achieve reductions in greenhouse emissions without affecting our economy negatively.
- We need to improve our environmental performance. Recent literature suggests our per capita energy consumption is one of the largest on Earth, as is our environmental footprint.
- The World cannot sustain it's current population at the level of nations like Australia and the USA. We need to reduce our environmental impact by reduction in energy consumption.
- At the same time we need to assist emerging nations to take advantage of environmentally friendly technology to allow them to improve their standard of living without increasing their environmental impact.
- With regard to the veracity of theories on global warming - the Enhanced Greenhouse Effect is FACT. Releasing the energy which has been accumulated in fossil fuels over millions of years over several centuries can only have a significant impact on the planet's climate. The third Principle of the Convention states "3...lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing such measures..." The only viable solutions are to dramatically cut our usage of non-renewable energy sources.
- Areas we should pursue in our national interest are:
  - Revegetation. The whole issue of land degradation and salinity in Australia has had widespread media coverage of late as the true significance of the problem has come to light. This issue alone, ignoring

any issues of climate change, is significant enough to make revegetation mandatory.

- Sequestration. The issue of using trees as a carbon sink can only be viewed as a short-term measure, but over time the effect is null. Eventually trees will die, rot and decay and thus re-release the sequestered carbon dioxide back into the atmosphere. There is a short-term benefit in pursuing re-forestation but it cannot be considered a long-term and continuing solution.
  - Forests. Any natural stands of old growth (pre-European settlement) forest/trees should be considered a national asset of immeasurable value. They should not be logged in any way. Any stands of native trees older than a certain age should also be considered a national asset and be allowed to return to an old-growth state. Any younger stands of native trees could be considered as managed forest or plantation and should be managed in a sustainable way to provide a wood resource while at the same time provide a carbon sink.
  - Land management. The above three issues cover some aspects of land management. We also need to consider agricultural and urban land usage and how we can address areas of land degradation. Further widespread clearing of land (as is currently happening in Queensland) should be curtailed. Uncleared land is beneficial both as a carbon sink and to maintain biological diversity.
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- Areas we should investigate but minimise use of include trading credits and carbon credits. These may be useful as a short term solution to allow adjustment from an existing high impact to a future low impact situation. They should not be pursued until the strategies or approaches to achieve the emission/energy reductions are in place. The concern with these approaches is that nations may 'buy time' on a 'permanent' basis with no intention of ever repaying the debt (in this case reducing emissions and energy use). That is, the primary objective of any emission credits scheme must be to lead to genuine reductions in the long term.
  - There are advantages in pursuing both 'carrot' and 'stick' approaches to cause changes in behaviour of individuals and organisations. Examination of some European countries would be of value - for example, the way that Denmark has become a world leader in wind energy, and some of the more enlightened approaches of the Netherlands, Germany and the Scandinavian definitely bear closer examination.
  - The primary initiative Australia should undertake is to improve energy efficiency - an area where we are well behind most other OECD nations. Secondly, we should actively pursue the development of renewable energy supplies. We are well endowed with the 'raw materials' - in this case sunlight and wind - to become a leading nation in the use of these technologies (if Denmark can become a world leader in wind power, why aren't we?)

I believe that the issue of the environment is seen by some as a political issue.

This is not the case - the environment and man's impact upon it is too important to be considered political. Society and culture need to adjust to reduce our impact - or there will be no society to adjust.

A final quote from 'Global Environmental Crises - An Australian Perspective' (Aplin, etal 1995; Oxford University Press) is worth considering - "Ultimately, each person on Earth need to make a commitment to play their part, however small and insignificant that may seem, in reversing the environmental deterioration of recent decades... Above all, we need to reassess our consumption and waste generation and to think deeply about our own relationship with nature and the global environmental system."

Yours sincerely

Angus King

Kind regards

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Switched on Solar!