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**From:** DALY Graham [SMTP:Graham.DALY@add.nsw.gov.au]  
**Sent:** Friday, August 25, 2000 11:42 PM  
**To:** 'jsct@aph.gov.au'  
**Cc:** 'forests@nccnsw.org.au'  
**Subject:** Submission on Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change

Canopy Native Forest Committee  
c/- Total Environment Centre  
Level 2, 362 Kent St  
Sydney NSW 2000  
25/8/00

The Secretary  
Joint Standing Committee on Treaties  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam

Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on the question of whether ratification of the Kyoto Protocol is in Australia's national interest. I am writing on behalf of the Canopy Native Forest Committee, a voluntary community organisation concerned with the conservation of our native forests and their protection from damaging activities.

Canopy strongly supports the continued participation of the Australian Government in the Protocol as a means whereby we can fulfil our responsibilities in contributing to the reduction of the greenhouse phenomenon that our nation has helped to create.

The greenhouse effect is having increasingly serious impacts on the health of the planet as shown by the latest findings on the thawing of the Arctic ice cap and the extremes of temperature and climate that we have all experienced in recent years.

However, the commitment of the current Commonwealth Government to resolving this problem and alleviating further threats can be described as questionable at best. After negotiating an increase in greenhouse gas emissions by 2010, in contrast to the decreases required of most developed nations, Australia now finds itself producing more than twice the agreed increase of greenhouse gas emissions according to the National Greenhouse Gas Inventory. The Commonwealth Government has taken little positive action to arrest this problem and we understand that it has recently decided, even before the public consultation period is completed, not to introduce a mandatory domestic emissions trading scheme within Australia.

The Commonwealth Government should not only ratify, but should begin actively and seriously participating in the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change. There is no question that this approach is in Australia's national interest.

Firstly, we invite the Committee to consider the potential economic, environmental and human costs to this country of an unhindered greenhouse

effect, for example with lost agricultural productivity in many areas and the increasing incidence of extreme weather and natural disasters. Secondly, we would remind the Committee of the need for Australia to act as a responsible world citizen, particularly given our disproportionately large contribution to total greenhouse gas emissions, possibly the worst per capita of any nation, and the extent to which we can act as an example for poorer, developing nations.

The first priority of the Australian Government is to reduce the existing levels of emissions rather than attempt to trade them off against new activities that provide some real or imagined benefits. Plantations have been touted as one solution but their advantages in taking up carbon are negated if clearing and soil disturbance, that release carbon, are required to establish them. The benefits of plantations take years to show up as the trees grow to maturity and there is the risk that the trees will be logged or burnt before sufficient quantities of carbon are absorbed.

Canopy is particularly concerned about new proposals in NSW for burning timber from native forests in power stations in place of coal. The promotion of such "biomass energy" as a greenhouse solution is entirely fraudulent. If the carbon accounting methodology used in the Protocol only counts greenhouse emissions from the burning of coal and not that from the burning of wood then it is in serious need of revision! Moreover the increased amount of logging and other forestry activities that will need to be undertaken in existing native forests to maintain supplies to the proposed biomass operations will only add to greenhouse gas emissions. The Australian Greenhouse Office is to be condemned for its support for this source of energy which will continue to contribute to the greenhouse effect and, to the extent that it is marketed as "green energy", will compete with and reduce consumer confidence in legitimate non-emitting energy such as solar and wind power.

One of the difficulties the present Commonwealth Government is having in meeting its obligations under the Kyoto Protocol is its failure to recognize the vital role that mature and old growth forests and woodlands play as carbon stores. Instead it persists with policies, such as the removal of controls on export woodchips and support for industry friendly Regional Forest Agreements, that encourage and entrench activities that disturb or destroy these assets and release quantities of carbon into the atmosphere that cannot possibly be consumed by regrowth forests. The Government previously attempted to obtain greenhouse credits through an alleged reduction in land clearing in Australia but is now allowing unprecedented levels of clearing to continue in western Queensland.

An integrated approach is needed by the Commonwealth Government in order for Australia to reduce its contribution to the greenhouse effect and encourage other nations to do the same. The development and expansion of solar and wind energy, the progressive replacement of petrol and diesel with cleaner fuels in motor vehicles, more energy conservation and increased availability and use of public transport need to be supported by the Government, financially and in other ways. Activities that add to the greenhouse effect including coal, oil and biomass energy, excessive motor vehicle use, land clearing and intensive logging need to be discouraged through the Government's policies, legislation and taxation reform. The retention intact of existing native vegetation, especially our remaining areas of old growth forest and woodland, must be promoted by the Australian Government, both

inside and outside this country, as a positive move in combating the greenhouse effect. Plantations, established with suitable species on previously cleared land, should be supported particularly where they are associated with a reduction of logging in native forests and salinity control.

Of course, the social and economic consequences of all proposed measures to counter the greenhouse effect need to be properly assessed. The propaganda of self serving industry groups about the impacts of genuine greenhouse measures should be given no credit. The overall impact on the natural environment of actual or purported proposals to curb the greenhouse effect, such as the implications for biodiversity and soil and water quality, also need to be taken into account. This is particularly so for plantation and biomass energy projects.

As Australians and citizens of the world, we hope that our Government will represent us responsibly by assisting in the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change.

Yours sincerely

Graham Daly  
Chairperson