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From: lisaland [SMTP:lisaland@one.net.au]
Sent: Wednesday, August 16, 2000 5:33 PM
To: jsct@aph.gov.au
Subject: Submission: Inquiry into the Kyoto Protocol

The Chair,
Joint Standing Committee on Treaties,
Parliament House,
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Sir / Madam

I wish to comment on the Kyoto Protocol

Ratification of the Kyoto Protocol on climate change is definitely in Australia's national interest.

Australia's emission target is a very lenient one.

There should be no further caving in to fossil fuel companies who question the validity of human induced global warming. We have an obligation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions as a matter of high priority:

There is broad scientific agreement on human-caused global warming.

In 1996, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), representing 2,500 of the world's leading climate scientists, released a major assessment on climate change. The 3600-page report reduces many of the uncertainties surrounding the issue. The IPCC came to the conclusion that on the balance of evidence, human made greenhouse pollution is changing the world's climate. Scientist predict global warming they will lead to climate change next century, with potentially disastrous impacts on biodiversity, coasts, agriculture, water and health. In 1999, after a hurricane of so far unknown destructive power hit parts of Europe, Klaus Töpfer, the head of the United Nations Environment Program stated "we are already in the middle of climate change". 1,000 CEOs at the World Economic Forum in Davos voted the "devastating trends" of climate change as the greatest challenge facing humanity in the new Millennium.

There are a few isolated pockets of scientists who question that greenhouse pollution is causing global warming. For the most part these scientists are funded by polluting fossil fuel companies. Even large fossil fuel multinationals such as Shell and BP have accepted the scientific consensus on global warming and are now moving to cut emissions of greenhouse pollution and shift from oil to the production of renewable energy such as wind and solar.

Since the industrial revolution, the concentration of carbon dioxide, the main

greenhouse gas, has increased by 30 per cent.

Recent studies show that the warming trend this century is unlikely to be due to natural phenomena such as increased solar output. The IPCC has now stated that "the balance of evidence suggests that there is discernible human influence on global climate"¹.

It has also estimated that to stabilise the atmospheric concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere will eventually require cutting greenhouse gas emissions by between 60 and 80 per cent below current levels. The longer we delay cutting emissions, the greater and more rapid are the cuts that will be needed in the future.

To delay responding is to ignore the "precautionary principle"¹ of decision making. This principle states that when there is a high possibility of major or irreversible environmental or social damage as a consequence of human activities, lack of scientific certainty should not be used as a justification for not taking action.

- Australia should ratify the Kyoto Protocol
- There are many economic opportunities in changing Australia's economy into a greenhouse friendly one
- Human induced warming of the earth is recognised by the world's scientific community as a reality
- The scientific community is also concerned about the irreversible impacts of climate change
- There are economic, environmental and human costs if we do not immediately reduce the amount of CO₂ going into the atmosphere
- Climate skeptics' arguments such as those made by the 'Lavoisier Group' have no scientific weight and should not be encouraged by decision-makers.
- The UN has listed climate change as one of the biggest environmental problems currently facing the world.

Australia's pathetic Record:

Australia's target is the *second smallest* of the 19 countries with renewable energy targets, and severely lags behind international best practice. The average target of all countries is 7.4% compared to Australia's 2% target.

Australia has the world's highest per capita greenhouse pollution rates and Australia has the highest tree clearing rate of developed countries despite the fact that CSIRO scientists say climate change will lead to more droughts in rural areas, more cyclone intensities, greater heat stress in cattle, the death of the

Great Barrier Reef, the spread of Ross River Virus and malaria as mosquitoes become more prevalent and many other impacts which will place a great economic burden on the next generation.

National Greenhouse Gas Inventory figures show Australia's pollution emissions have increased by 16.9% on 1990 levels, with a 5.2% increase in just one year from 1997 to 1998, the largest annual increase yet recorded.

Despite the stated acceptance by government of the grave risks posed by climate change, current policy continues to strongly support fossil fuel exploration and development. This is contradictory to ESD and the precautionary principle, not to mention the Government's own policy.

The Australian Conservation Foundation estimates that currently more than 100 fossil fuel projects are undergoing assessment or feasibility studies in Australia.

Government support for fossil fuel development takes the form of tax incentives, startup grants, preferential purchasing agreements and pricing mechanisms which fail to include environmental damage. Associate Professor Ian Lowe, a leading academic on climate change, estimates direct subsidies to the fossil fuel industry are \$2 billion per annum. If indirect subsidies such as damage to the environment due to fossil fuel use are included, this figure increases to \$4-5 billion per annum.

The Government has still not begun implementation of the 2% renewables target two years after the program was announced. In the two years Australia has been talking Denmark has increased its renewables production by 3%. Worse, in the two years Australia has been talking, renewable energy electricity generation has actually decreased in Australia by 0.6%! The Government's 2% target, should now be a 2.6% target.

Solar hot water can reduce a household's greenhouse pollution emissions by 1/3 but only 3-4% of Australian households have solar hot water heaters on their roofs. Israel and Crete demand that solar hot water heaters must be put on all new homes. European countries such as the Netherlands, Turkey and Italy all have solar hot water penetration rates of above 20% putting Australia to shame.

Voluntary programs have clearly failed, illustrated by the fact that from 1997 to 1998 each person in Australia consumed 5.4% more energy on average. The continuing growth in emissions from the industrial sector demonstrates that Australia must move beyond the current voluntary "no regrets" approach.

the Greenhouse Challenge program has few incentives for involvement and no compliance requirements. After four years of operation only 209 of Australia's 890,000 businesses have signed on. The AGO's leading energy efficiency program is not only a toothless tiger, it is so small that it is completely ineffectual.

Under the Kyoto Protocol, Australia has promised to hold its emissions levels at 108% by the year 2010 - it is now at 116.9% and rising.

Penalties for not meeting the target are too low. It is currently cheaper to pay the penalties than install clean wind power.

Greater effort required by Australia to reduce emissions

Up to 25 per cent of Australia's greenhouse gas emissions come from broad acre land clearing. Controlling broad acre land clearing would have enormous benefits for the Australian economy and environment, quite apart from reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Land degradation costs hundreds of millions of dollars each year in lost production.

I urge the Senate to strengthen The Renewable Energy (Electricity 2000) Bill to avoid a dangerous loophole in the bill which could encourage the forest felling. This is because it will be easier for electricity companies to burn woodchips with their existing factory equipment than it is for them to source wind, solar and tidal power."

Voluntary industry programs have been a dismal failure - under no regrets policy Australia has overshot its Kyoto target.

Australia must now legislate for an enforceable cap of greenhouse pollution and back this up with targeted performance-based regulation.

Planting trees for short term carbon storage is not a substitute for leaving carbon in long term geological sediments. Stopping burning fossil fuels is the only real solution to global warming.

A shift from fossil fuels to efficient use of renewable energy such as wind and solar is the only solution to climate change. Allowing industry to meet their responsibilities to reduce greenhouse pollution by planting trees undermines investment in renewable energy technology and the development of Australia and a sustainable renewable energy powerhouse for the 21st century. Money that should be going to wind farms, energy efficiency and renewables industrial development will instead be spent on planting trees.

It is vital that Australia joins the 14 nations who have already ratified the protocol, and the more than 60 additional nations who have committed themselves to ratify in time for the Protocol to enter into force by 2002.

I urge the Australian government to take three steps:

- Introduce national laws to reduce greenhouse pollution;
- Join Japan and Europe in ratifying the Kyoto Protocol by 2002;
- Follow Denmark, in introducing a greenhouse pollution trading scheme and other types of greenhouse pollution reduction.

I strongly support the Australian Conservation Foundation's position in regard to all terms of reference including their position on: grandfathering; trading credits; carbon credits; sequestration; revegetation; land management etc.

The ACF offer well researched, effective and practical strategies for us to deal with this problem and the implementation of such strategies is well overdue.

Please count this as a submission to your enquiry.

Yours Sincerely

Lisa McDermott

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