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

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Ratification of the Kyoto Protocol target emissions 2008.

Introduction

Thankyou for the opportunity to comment on this inquiry. This submission will be submitted both electronically and in hard copy form.

This submission is presented by Conservation Initiatives for Sustainability (CIS). CIS is a network or affiliation of independent, small businesses working in the areas of Environmental Management, Town Planning & Urban Design and Sustainable Development in Western Australia. As both business people and trained professionals in environmental and related disciplines we take the issue of ratification of the Kyoto Protocol extremely seriously.

Implications for Ratification

The current debate regards the Kyoto Protocol ratification could be viewed as very successful lobbying by some sectors of industry sector to derail Australia's Kyoto obligations for the sake of a vested interest in maintaining the status quo. Unfortunately this overlooks a number of other sectors of society, implications for future generations and the future economy that will suffer under greenhouse scenarios.

It is unfortunate that many politicians appear ignorant of the wider implications of climate change, are often focused on narrow economic practices and are unable to take a long term view of policies and practices that are in the interests of Australia, in this regard.

The implications for not proceeding with ratification will portray Australia as an irresponsible country on the international scene and largely hypocritical in its actions, as this country has some of the largest per capita emissions in the world. The response by developing countries through trade and investment is likely to be negative.

The consequences of not proceeding are unlikely to affect our economy, environment nor social issues in the short term as Australia is relatively small by international standards. However, the fossil fuel economy is likely to be overtaken by a hydrogen based economy and international trading protocols that show strong environmental compliance and energy management.

This can be seen as an emerging factor in S.E. Asia, where Corporate Environmental Management Systems (ISO14000) are increasing and show the trading credentials of organizations. Most of these organizations are being advised by European organizations that are developing partnerships and improving their presence in the region. Australia's lost opportunity!!!

Failure to ratify will mean business as usual in the short term. However, in the long term it will mean we have lost our international standing. Our environment will continue to degrade. Air quality will continue to decline in cities, agricultural productivity will decline as salinity spreads in many states, a problem that can be partly addressed through and sequestration and reforestation programs.

Australia will not be the smart country and will miss out on more opportunities in R&D and the development and sale of new technologies. Australia will have missed considerable opportunities to harness the considerable and abundant renewable energies in this country.

Our industries will not modernise and will act in a complacent manner as there are no incentives to promote best practice. Socially our cities will remain dominated by the motor car which forces social dislocation and reduces community interaction. Consequently many social ills will remain and increase.

Ratifying the Kyoto Protocol is a moral obligation, it recognises our obligation (Brundtland Commission 1985) as a developed country and encourages the development of new technologies and approaches to environmental management and planning. It will stimulate new industries and allows us to harness the many renewable resources in Australia.

If Australia as a wealthy nation, can't afford to modernise in this manner, what can we expect from developing countries? Failure to ratify overlooks the economic consequences of climate change that will affect the country's private and public infrastructure, agricultural productivity and fisheries, community health, disease control. It will adversely affect both current and future generations and the economy in a substantial way. Australia cannot afford not to ratify the Kyoto Protocol and the longer this issue is put off, the more it will cost all sectors of society. We pay now or we pay later at an elevated interest rate for the country's financial and natural capital.

Conflicting Scientific Theory

There should be no conflict regarding the certainty of the Enhanced Greenhouse Effect. The vast majority of independent and credible atmospheric scientists have stated their views a number of times on this issue.

Industry funded scientists have managed to confuse this debate. Recent research has debunked these arguments and politicians should be listening to their own government advisors and professionals in academic institutions, not a few industry-funded individuals.

There have been many recent weather anomalies to enforce the view that the Enhanced Greenhouse Effect is occurring. Recent predictions (UN 1999) that there is a 30 year time lag between the release of carbon into the atmosphere and the response of the climate, makes this an urgent issue.

The consequences of climate change and extreme events have been predicted to be many and varied, therefore the precautionary principle should be applied to this issue.

Proposed Solutions

Our group favours the reduction in the use of fossil fuels and the introduction of trading credits and carbon credits.

The following strategies are seen as effective in reducing carbon emissions and promoting greater efficiencies:

- Greater improvements in transport and integrated land use planning.
- Passive solar design in all new residential and commercial buildings to be incorporated into the building criteria. (Building Code of Australia)
- Domestic energy reduction and local area energy generation through the use of improved technology. (Eg. roof top photo voltaic technologies)
- Tradable permits for industry and the establishment of carbon emission ceilings.
- Revegetation as a sequestration strategy and for biodiversity conservation.
- Financial/tax assistance for all renewable energy projects.
- Assisted conversion of diesel equipment and plant to a dual fuel system or gas.
- Removal of the diesel fuel rebate to be replaced with a substantial gas fuel rebate.
- All power station projects to have a renewable energy component. (co-generation)
- Greater R&D into applications for hydrogen fuel technologies.
- Wide promotion and adoption of *Cleaner Production* methodologies in industry and business.
- Federal, State and local government agencies should be required to meet minimum standards in energy conservation, building design, use of alternative fuels etc. Eg. In Western Australia:
 1. State Government vehicle fleets could be converted to run on gas at around \$400 per vehicle, which would be recouped in fuel savings and make those vehicles available to the wider community at a later date.
 2. Landcorp (WA's state land development agency) operate in a similar manner to any large private developer and undertake the minimal environmental requirements wherever they can. Energy nor water conservation is a consideration in any form of development, however there is considerable potential to influence how future development is undertaken, using Agenda 21 principles and sound environmental planning guidelines promoted by other government agencies.

Definitions and Criteria

While all the strategies listed are supported as well as the additional policies and guidelines suggested above, we are not in a position to suggest definitions and criteria.

However, our group does not believe that sequestration should be undertaken without a significant effort to minimise fossil fuel use. In considering sequestration and revegetation, a range of issues should also be addressed. These include timber and oil production, soil conservation, and biodiversity enhancement.

Additional Comment

Australia has missed opportunities to develop and promote new technologies and services that will serve to improve the function of our cities and maintain our unique environmental assets. These technologies and services are increasingly marketable overseas and our companies will continue to miss out on a share of this emerging business if the capacity for these services are not generated in our own country.

This inquiry needs to recognise the growing trends in environmental management and the urgent need to start to develop sound environmental standards practices that don't result in the by-products of our economic system generating unrepairable damage to the earth.

The issues of today, demand that our politicians have a greater understanding of the results of their decisions. Greater education into the science of the Enhanced Greenhouse Effect and the significance of its many possible ramifications is an outcome from this inquiry that would assist in future decision making on this issue.

We have entered a new millennium and have new and significant issues that demand different approaches and a commitment to present and future generations. It also demands politicians make decisions based on long term issues. Those that don't will hopefully go the way of the Dodo bird.

We are optimistic the views expressed in this submission will be reflected in the committee's recommendations and that as a member of the international community and a wealthy, developed nation that we "get on with it".

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