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The Chair
Joint Standing Committee on Treaties
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
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Re.: Parliamentary Inquiry into the Kyoto Protocol

Dear Madam/Sir,

My submission to the Inquiry is as follows:

I believe that Australia should ratify the protocol forthwith. There are numerous gains for Australia and the world in us doing so, and only losses if we do not. Whilst there is doubt about the fine details of climate change, there is a broad scientific consensus that significant climate change is occurring and that human activity is almost certainly a major contributing factor.

It is also absolutely certain that there are many measures which could be taken to significantly reduce our greenhouse gas emissions which would provide nett economic and social benefits for Australia. Most of these are actions which we should be taking for reasons other than greenhouse gas reduction anyway. A few of the more obvious examples: we could stop land clearing; increase the use of renewable energy and passive solar design in building construction; design our cities to reduce the demand for energy intensive transport; improve public transport; and improve the energy efficiency of equipment, in households, offices and industrial buildings. The Rocky Mountains Institute has demonstrated that dramatic reductions in energy use are easy to obtain in many different fields if we only design things sensibly.

We could make a big start on meeting our Kyoto commitments if we would only change our financial and legislative incentives - moving them away from energy intensive and environmentally destructive technologies and practices and into environmentally more benign ones.

If Australia does not quickly ratify the protocol we will be letting the world (and ourselves) down. How on earth could we expect the developing countries to take climate change seriously if we, a rich, technologically advanced country refused to do so?

We do not yet know the fine details of what will happen as the globe warms, but if decisive action is not taken and taken rapidly there is little doubt that we will see massive disruption to

ecological systems, including many extinctions, and to our own agriculture, health, and economy.

If Australia acts quickly to meet the challenge of climate change by reducing our emissions, as well as helping reduce environmental damage, we will benefit many Australian industries, create many jobs, encourage innovation and improve our economy. If on the other hand, we refuse to change, we will be left behind by the world and seen for what we are - too selfish, too short-sighted and too frightened to change.

Yours sincerely,

David Wanless.