

To Senators on the Senate Select Committee on Climate Policy,

Remember the fuss when lead free petrol was made mandatory?
Car makers declared that it was too costly and difficult to make cars that ran on lead free fuels.

Also remember, when CFC's were identified as the agent that was destroying the ozone layer, Maggie Thatcher refused to sign up to a worldwide ban because it would 'cost British business and growth'.

For those old enough to remember, :-), the same arguments were probably used by horse powered industries when cars first appeared.

It's easy to get into an argument over climate change, but there can be no argument over the wisdom of one contribution I saw on U-tube.

That contributor put the following proposition:

1. There are two choices. Either you believe climate change is man made or you believe it is part of a natural cycle. 2. whichever of those is true, there is no choice available to us when we consider our response.

Consider this:

If climate change is man made, and we act decisively and quickly, we have a chance of saving The Barrier Reef. Antarctic sea life, the planet's basic food chain, Europe and Asia's primary water supply from melting Himalaya snow, the worlds river deltas, our seabord cities, seabord drainage systems, etc, etc.

If climate change is not man made, and we act decisively and quickly, we reduce pollution, create a whole new class of jobs, so we are still ahead.

If climate change is man made and we do not act or act too slowly, we lose all of the above.

What will follow that will be a period of unprecedented violence as people become desperate and nations fight over water and other rapidly diminishing resources, including arable land. The planet itself will become a hostile place for the creatures that evolved in its historic environment. The planet will recover, but Man and many of his fellow creatures are unlikely to be there to see it.

If you wonder why young people are so restless, see the world from their viewpoint. Fed on a media diet of gloom while being offered token leadership in this, the most pressing and potentially the most serious problem faced by any species since the demise of the dinosaurs, offers little hope of the world's people coming out of this spiral with their culures intact or even their lives.

Coal is carbon that nature pulled from the first atmosphere and buried underground. Coal was the first hazardous waste dump. It withdrew enough carbon from the carbon cycle to allow oxygen to become stable in the atmosphere. We are reversing that process by burning fossil fuels and pushing the atmosphere back to where it was in a more primitive time.

For us and you, our represenatives and leaders, there is no logical choice. We must treat climate change as the enemy and go onto a war footing to have any chance of maintaining the planet in anything like the state in which we were produced and nurtured.

The government must believe its own scientists and back them with a fudamental shift to renewable energy, pushed by a strong and steep Carbon Trading Scheme.

It will cost, and many will say we can't afford it now. In fact it will always be the wrong time for some. We couldn't afford any of the great wars either, but we did not pick the timing, so it was reasonably politically safe to marshal our resources and commit hundreds of thousands of lives and our national wealth to face those threats.

This threat is far more serious than any war. There will be no end to this threat and there is no way back.

I am a single aged pensioner. Balancing my budget does not allow for luxuries or even some expenditures others regard as basic, but I am willing to pay more for electricity, which I will use even more sparingly to make my contribution to the success of a carbon reduction scheme.

It is too late to wait for public opinion to reach a point where you can safely follow in its wake. We need leadership now.

Leadership in informing, as a previous government did when facing the AIDS epidemic, offering vision as a previous government did in giving us the Snowy Mountain Scheme, the national railway system, etc, etc, and guts to take on the big polluters and the compassion to guide redundant workers to retrain and move to the new class of jobs that will flow from new industries.

You will be lobbied, as other reforming governments have been, by business that does not want to change. Like your government, they may not survive the change.

However, if we wait until it is politically safe and economically safe to change, it will not happen. There will never be a good time.

A rapid change to renewable energy supported by a strong and steep CTS is the most obvious way we can contribute to a global effort to save the planet.

Is that more important than the (temporary) survival of the Rudd government or BHP or Rio's (temporary) bottom line?

We can't wait until someone else sets the pace. We are a wealthy country by any standards and must use our wealth to create the new "Snowy Mountain Schemes".

You may even lose your seat over this, but then again, you may become the heroes that led the charge. However, if you dither, you endanger much more. Your grand children may not survive the rapid degradation of the planet and the mayhem that will follow.

Let's have the bad news and let's get on with it.

In action there is hope.

Stafford Ray