

To Senators on the Senate Select Committee on Climate Policy,

I would like to appear as a witness before the committee, to give evidence on the facts surrounding a serious flaw in the emissions trading scheme, i.e. that it ignores population growth as an underlying driver of climate change.

Prime Minister Rudd's rationale for rejecting the Garnaut White Paper 25 per cent option was that Australia's population growth is high relative to Europe's. He stated: "If the Europeans were to embrace the same per capita obligations that we're about to embrace, then you'd be seeing European reductions of the vicinity of 30 per cent".

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Rudd actually understated by 4 per cent the calculation in the White Paper, which was that the 15 per cent cut for the nation will actually mean, because of population growth, that individual Australians will have to cut their emissions by an average of 34 per cent.

By the same calculation, Garnaut's 25 per cent cut would be equivalent to a 42 per cent per capita cut. Both cases assume a projected population of 24.6 million in 2020, which is a conservative estimate of where current growth rates are heading. Australia has the highest population growth rate of any industrialised nation, of 1.8%, more than seven times higher than the average for industrialised nations of 0.25 %. Our annual population increase in 2007-2008 was the highest on record, 360,000 (ABS media release, December 2008)

The Government clearly recognises the link between climate change and population growth. The link is succinctly stated by Melbourne demographers Bob Birrell and Ernest Healey, who stated in a recent article in *People and Place* (Vol 16, No 2) "Australia's total emissions are determined by the multiplication of per capita emissions by the number of people. If population grows, there will be a parallel increase in total greenhouse emissions".

Birrell and Healey calculate that if Australia's population were to grow from 21.7 million to just 22.7 million by 2050 (with nil net migration), this would result in 276 million tonnes less than if it continued to grow approximately at current rates to the ABS projection of 31.6 million. That is, the saving achieved by having 9 million fewer people would be almost almost as much as the around 295 million tonnes which would flow from a one per cent annual reduction in the carbon intensity of the energy supply.

Clearly, if Australia both reduced its per capita emissions and reduced its population growth, the nation would be much better able to achieve very deep cuts in emissions. Any comprehensive proposal for Australia to reach near-zero emissions cannot logically avoid population growth as a contributing factor to total emissions.

As outlined by Paul Ehrlich and John Holdren (now President Obama's Science Adviser), environmental impact is a function of three factors: population, affluence and technology. This is summarised in the well-known "IPAT" formula,  $I = P \times A \times T$ .

As it currently stands, the Summit's policy recommendations are strong on "A" (Affluence) and "T" (Technology), i.e. they quite rightly emphasise the need for people to adopt less energy-intensive lifestyles and the need for energy technology. But the recommendations currently miss the third vital "P" (Population) factor. The appropriate analogy is the three-legged stool. If it only has two legs, it will fall over.

In political terms, there are “good” reasons why the Government, Garnaut, CSIRO and many others are reluctant to suggest anything but business as usual with regard to Australia’s absurdly high population growth rate – they are intimidated by the business interests who see population growth as essential for economic growth – a sacred cow that none dare challenge.

However the Productivity Commission found (Economic Impacts of Migration and Population Growth, April 2006) that there would be only a miniscule increase of less than one per cent in per capita income. The Commission modeled what would happen if there was a 50 per cent increase in immigration. It found that while the overall size of the economy would grow by 4.6 per cent, individuals’ incomes would be increased by only 0.7 per cent. There could also be negative quality of life and environmental issues, but these were “not amenable to measurement”.

Puzzlingly, it is not generally appreciated that the Howard Government actually tripled immigration over its 11 years in power, despite the overall perception that Howard was “anti-immigrant”. The Rudd Government has built on the Howard foundation and increased immigration even further, the principal explanation given being the mantra that immigration is “good for the economy”.

The IPAT logic holds on a global scale – nowhere is population growth a positive development for climate change. Global population is currently on track to grow from the current 6.8 billion to 9.2 billion by 2050. This increase, of 2.5 billion, is equivalent to the total number of people who existed on planet Earth in 1950.

If fertility does not continue to decline through continued family planning programs, the population in 2050 could rise by even more, to reach as high as 11 billion. However with a much more comprehensive family planning program in developing countries, it could be possible to achieve the UN’s low projection of around 8 billion. One billion fewer people would be highly desirable for climate change, as well as for many other compelling environmental and equity reasons.

It is a fact, not an opinion, that population growth cannot continue forever, in any country. Unless a global policy of population stabilization is adopted, all environmental gains, including climate change mitigation, are only temporary.

The notion of an under-populated Australia vs an over-populated planet smacks of double standards – one set of rules for us and another for everyone else.

## Recommendations

R1 The Government immediately abolish the baby bonus and cease all other measures aimed at encouraging population growth in Australia through natural increase.

R2 By regular increments to the year 2014, the Government significantly increase – at least double – Australia’s refugee immigration program, but reduce skilled immigration by 90 per cent.

R3 The Government adopt a population policy aiming to reduce Australia’s population growth rate to the global average for industrialised nations (0.25 per cent) by 2020. Thereafter, Australia aim to achieve population stability by 2040.

R4 By increments of 0.1 per cent per year, the Government increase its expenditure on overseas aid from the current target of 0.5 per cent of GDP to 1 per cent of GDP. Within the overseas aid budget, the proportion allocated to sexual and reproductive health and education of women be quadrupled.

R5 The Government significantly increase its support for and cooperation with the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) and other world bodies aiming to slow global population

growth by such measures as increasing education and status of women, and meeting the unmet demand for contraception and family planning.

R6 The Government raise awareness, domestically and in international climate change negotiations, of the role of population in multiplying greenhouse gas emissions and loss of carbon-absorbing forests due to agricultural expansion and settlement patterns.

Name: Tom Gosling