

Submission to Senate Select Committee on Climate Policy

The Secretary  
Senate Select Committee on Climate Policy  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

AUSTRALIA

**7 April 2009**

Dear Committee

I'm 19 years old, and I'm making a submission to this inquiry because at the end of the day, I'm the one who'll have to live with the consequences of the decisions we make today for the next 50 years. The actions of both the Government in particular and Parliament in general have truly made me scared of what the future will hold for me, because I kind of like this planet, and it'd be a shame if we as a society managed to stuff it up.

I am writing to express my deep concern over the proposed Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS), particularly in regards to the astonishingly low targets, inclusion of 'red credits' which allow for the possibility of zero emission cuts actually taking place in Australia, and over the gross over-compensation of our most polluting industries.

By proposing such a ridiculously small target of only 5%, with a conditional maximum of 15%, the Government has essentially thumbed its nose at the millions of Australian voters who elected the Labor Government in 2007 in the belief that they were voting for a significant effort to curb human-induced climate change. It is a sign of sheer contempt for the millions of Australians who have taken time and effort to participate in a range of activities from community meetings to protest marches to the recent Earth Hour initiative.

There is simply no possible reason for ignoring the challenges of human-induced climate change any longer. Report after report have come from reputable institutions working both outside and within government, showing the devastating consequences of not taking this challenge seriously. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's 'Fourth Assessment'

in 2007, the Garnaut Report in 2008, the Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change in 2006, along with dozens of papers from organisations such as the CSIRO, Australian Conservation Foundation and the World Wildlife Fund have all shown the economic, environmental and social benefits of acting strongly on human-induced climate change now. The appallingly low targets set by the Federal Government are if anything harmful to all aspects of Australia's interests. By implementing a scheme which compromises on the base aim of halting human-induced climate change, the CPRS threatens Australia's economic and social fabric, whilst failing to do anything to prevent the fundamental environmental issue.

***What would you think if a smoker said to you "I'm going to save my lungs by reducing my cigarettes by 5-15% over the next 11 years"?***

My first reaction would be to laugh, but I think that would be soon after followed by tears of despair for the poor soul. Unfortunately, this weak scheme impacts on every single citizen of this planet. We know 5-15% won't solve the problem. *We can't sit on the fence, because at the end of the day that will just give us a sore bum. The grass IS greener on the other side, we just need to go to the effort of climbing the over the fence.*

The inclusion of so called 'red credits' in this scheme simply weakens the CPRS's credibility even further. Not only are we proposing such small targets, with the abundance of cheap carbon credits in less developed countries there won't even be an incentive to physically reduce our emissions within Australia. That will make for a great tag-line: *"Australia: Saving the world by doing absolutely nothing!"*

Even worse, by allowing large Australian corporations to enter the carbon markets of our less developed neighbours, we deny these countries the opportunities of cheap and quick economic development using the same technologies which developed our own great country. The carbon credits in these countries must be left for their own local industries, to

ensure everyone has the opportunity for economic development AND carbon emissions reductions.

A constant feature in the debate over the CPRS has been the constant claim that we shouldn't seek reductions similar to other nations because our industries would be adversely affected. This argument is so arrogant and selfish as to be an embarrassment to the Australian global image. The fact that we rely more on these heavily polluting industries simply means that we need to work harder to kick the habit.

*Australians are an intelligent and adaptable people*, and we are more than capable of making the switch to a low-carbon economy if only the government would allow and nurture our development. Schemes like the CPRS, which negate any personal reductions by allowing polluting industries to simply emit more carbon, kill off any individual enterprise and serve only to stunt Australia's development. What we need is a scheme which recognises the potential of Australia to become a world leader in the low-carbon economy. We need a scheme which goes beyond a rehashed marketplace and industry handouts. If we can hand out \$900 to almost half the population so they can go off and buy new plasma TVs, we can sure as hell hand out money for people to invest in renewable start-ups, small wind farm cooperatives, retrofitting of solar panels and making the switch to low-carbon transport options (such as an Australian made hybrid car?).

It is an absolute disgrace that start-up Australian businesses in the renewables sector, particularly solar in recent months, have been forced offshore because other countries were more supportive of these industries which are so vital to the very survival of our planet. It is even worse to see our Prime Minister parade about in Adelaide propping up the car industry with promises of a new 'green car' from Holden, which ends up being a sporty hatchback that RUNS ON PETROL. Did we all miss something? I think when most people heard 'green' they assumed electric or hydrogen, or at the very least a petrol/ electric hybrid.

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This is a country where our politicians like to talk about how 'aspirational' we are. It's time for the government to stop pushing us down and give us a hand up into a brand new low-carbon economy.

Please remember in making your findings that the issues posed are without precedent in the history of democratic society. This isn't another local political issue. This is a global challenge which will have its greatest effect on people who aren't even born yet. You might not have to answer to them face to face, but it is vital that the decisions made today consider them as equal stakeholders in this process. I trust that your findings will do both present and future Australians justice.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Oliver