

# The Senate Select Committee on Climate Policy.

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Dear Sirs,

Thank you for this opportunity to make a contribution to what is certainly the most important issue ever to be considered by this nation. I am a retired Marine Engineer with a total of 40 years experience in engineering based largely on power production from fossil fuels. As such I have little experience with many of the clean energy technologies such as photo voltaic cells but can relate comfortably with solar thermal, geo thermal and nuclear which all have related technologies but different heat sources. I therefore believe I have enough expertise to provide an informed opinion on the merits and hazards of most energy systems currently in use or under consideration.

I wish to suggest that the current planned emission reductions of 5 to 15% as set by this government are completely inadequate to contain greenhouse gases to a level recommended by climate scientists, a fact that is acknowledged by the government itself.

It is therefore necessary for this committee to determine not only if the targets can be improved in the short term, but to ensure that we are moving our economy in a way that will allow a much more significant reduction in the future.

The present government headed by the Prime Minister Kevin Rudd was elected largely on the perception that it would tackle climate change and it has failed to do so largely because of its reliance on conservative economic policies, particularly the belief that growth is essential for economic success. That this concept has failed should be obvious by the present economic situation but unfortunately there has been no real, (meaning one acceptable to conservative thinkers), alternative economic model.

If however we are to compare the performances of scientists, who have predicted the current weather pattern that both drowns the north of our nation and burns the south we can only accuse them of being overly cautious with their climate predictions. This is in direct contrast to market guru's and economists who predicted an unstoppable boom just 18 months ago and are now advocating measures like printing money that would have been laughed at had they been suggested just months earlier. Yet it is the latter discipline that remains dominant in forming government policy, science is only used when it is applicable to government agenda.

One example of this has been the government's failure to implement the easy options of enhancing efficiency of energy systems and reducing waste. A simple program should have been commenced as soon as the government took office with the aim of diverting the population away from inefficient products, lawn mowers, leaf blowers, subsidized car transport etc and turn us into nation of Watt watchers. I believe that they failed to take this

step because of their reluctance to intervene in markets and the belief that growth is essential even when it is in useless items like leaf blowers.

Climate Change Minister Penny Wong's call for deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries to stop, because it produces 20% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions, is another approach that should be considered. If the government were to stop *unnecessary*, (ie rely on plantation timber sources only) deforestation in the Pacific region and Tasmania we would achieve a reduction of greenhouse gases up to four times the inadequate 5% target set under the Emissions Trading Scheme and at far less cost. Yet the government has rejected curtailing the logging of old growth forests in Tasmania and other states on the grounds that logging is necessary to maintain employment.

With relation to the concept of growth and the clash between science and economists I would strongly urge the committee to examine the arguments from the New Scientist magazine (issue 2678 15<sup>th</sup> October.) that uses a number of experts from different specialties to demonstrate the impossibility of maintaining a growth based economy.

In the immediate debate on climate change policy we as a nation have failed to provide useful GHG reductions for two reasons;

a) The first is our failure to move our economy away from fossil fuel technologies, something not even acknowledged by the government. It is a process that is essential, not only to reduce our carbon footprint, but in order to meet a new fossil free economy that must soon develop. This could occur because our resource customers are forced to change or because the world search for energy supplies comes up with something better. Given that current thermal technologies are limited in efficiencies by thermodynamic considerations we cannot expect more than incremental improvements in current technology, and even then this will involve greater complexity and loss of reliability. New technologies however are either not restrained in this way (Photo and Thermo voltaic systems and fuel cells) or are less dependent on efficiency because they do not produce CO<sub>2</sub>.

The second reason is one the government has admitted, it cannot achieve useful greenhouse gas reductions because of our population growth. Putting that in perspective, the proposed 5 – 15% emission reductions becomes a 34 - 41% reduction on a per capita basis suggesting that even meeting the weak national target of 5% will be difficult, anything more is unattainable. Despite acknowledging this difficulty the government has succumbed to following the economic concepts that have failed so spectacularly. It has raised population growth to 1.84% by higher immigration and maintaining the previous government's baby bonus scheme. Cutting population growth is not only essential for GHG reductions, it has considerable benefits for other nations. The skilled immigration program is one of the more sordid economic tricks that the developed world inflicts on its poorer neighbors. Over a quarter of our doctors are overseas trained and the major source of recruitment is the developing world. While ever Western nations continue to poach trained people, medical, engineering, teaching, etc they will deny other nations the capacity to develop. It is a crime against humanity that is implemented with the sole object of reducing our own expenditure on education and training. As such it has even impacted on our own population with an estimated 16% of the working age population on welfare payments, of these 750,000 are claiming DSP when according to Prof. Peter Saunders (*Australia's Welfare Habit, and how to kick it*)

half are really unemployed, a figure largely made up of unskilled workers for whom there is no employment.

As a nation we have suddenly lost over 90% of our rice crop, farmers are pulling out 100,000 fruit trees every year and a million square kilometers of irrigated land in the south is probably lost to agriculture. Towns like Wagga cannot meet air standards because of dust, which is polluting water tanks and Melbourne's water catchments is threatened by run off from the fire devastated regions. Despite the threat to our food base the Prime Minister appears to be in denial, telling the Japanese that Australia will always be a reliably supplier of food, even when we are buying rice from Pakistan where our entry into the market created price rises and great hardship for other buyers. The CSIRO is now telling the government that we will become a net wheat importer by 2070, yet we continue to allow coal mining in that very small percentage of our continent that can support agriculture, areas like the Hunter valley, and the Darling Downs will very likely have their water tables damaged by mining and their food production diminished.

To suggest that we cannot produce higher levels of emission reductions because of its impact on the economy or our population growth is obviously absurd. This is a matter of survival.

#### Recommendations;

1. Governments must turn away from reliance on economic principals when dealing with climate change and heed the advice of science.
2. We must immediately begin to phase out energy hungry or unnecessary objects which we have accumulated because of our consumption fetish.
3. Our manufacturing industry must be re invigorated and directed into the production of devices for clean power.
4. At the same time our research industries must be directed towards the same issues and not wasted on programs designed to prop up the fossil fuel industry.
5. We must immediately begin the task of stabilizing our population so that we can survive in a world of more erratic climate and scarce energy.

Yours faithfully,

Don Owers