

SUBMISSION FROM KAY ELSDEN

Sadly it is now beyond doubt that the natural environment as we know it is going to cease to exist in the next couple of hundred years. Life as we know it will also cease to exist. This fills me with grief because the natural world is such a beautiful place. I am further saddened that many of the students I teach at my school (and their children) will never see the exquisite natural scenes we have taken for granted. Despite this I have devoted the last two years to lowering my green house emissions as much as I can and will continue to do so to my dying breath. Legislation to stop Australia being the world's top polluter of greenhouse gases per head of population (or are we second?) is long overdue. Do we want to be world leaders – or are we going to be a laughing stock?

Last year I was diagnosed with cancer; my one positive was that I wouldn't have to watch the Great Barrier Reef die. While the amount of temperature increase from greenhouse pollution is less certain, the increase in carbonic acid in the oceans is not, and coral will no longer be able to lay down skeletons. It's a terrible indictment that I begin my submission urging the strongest possible green house targets by asking as a matter of urgency that artificial reefs be laid down to replace coral ones which at this stage cannot be saved no matter what we do. The loss of billions of dollars in tourism is a devastating; the permanent loss of one of the great wonders of the natural world is almost inconceivable – and that's if you act decisively. I don't regard canal estates as beautiful at all but there go many, many more billions of dollars as they are flooded by rising sea levels. The Rudd Government's targets to cut greenhouse pollution by just 5-15% by 2020 are far too weak and will add a huge range of natural disasters to the loss of the Barrier reef. The Murray-Darling basin and the south of Australia are in dire situations.

I am horrified that the federal government has either been bought or bullied by big business. Now the public is expected to subsidise the activities of polluting businesses through the proposed Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme. I did it really tough to install solar electric panels on a single income last year; I am asking you to ensure I don't want to do it tough again by supporting polluting big businesses through grants/subsidies/exemptions which will amount to billions of dollars. I am expanding my 1.5KW PV system to a 2KW system currently. This time I won't be selling the RECs because the current legislation means that I am selling someone a license to pollute if I do. It's a sad thing when individuals are forced to take a personal stand because their government does not. I cannot express my level of frustration at the stupidity of politicians who because it has never happened in their experience can't imagine a climate change happening now.

I believe we are at a historical cusp. It's a time as ground shaking as the abolition of slavery; it's a time which requires statesmen and stateswomen as lawmakers rather than the lackeys of big business. (And should we reflect where big business has taken us already when we decide whether to go further down that particular path?) We need immediate, strong action on climate change creating green jobs and a sustainable world. Basic risk management rules make it imperative that we act decisively now to fight climate change. I further suggest that those of you who have the power and fail to act against climate change will face an environmental-style Nuremberg trial in the future. If you do nothing the big question will be

How could you know and not do something about it?

Those in power who do not use basic risk management strategies in their approach to climate change are culpable. This includes members of the senate.

Yours faithfully

Kay Elsdon