

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

Dear Senators,

I am increasingly concerned about the rate of climate change and what the implications will be for my life in the future. It seems that the impacts of climate change are occurring much faster than even the worst case predictions, such as the increasing rate of melt of Arctic summer ice. Just yesterday I heard that a huge chunk of ice has collapsed off the west Antarctic ice shelf. We don't, and probably can't fully understand how the global climate system works or when critical tipping points will be reached that we cannot reverse. Therefore, it seems that we should be cautious and ensure that we give ourselves the best possible chance of avoiding catastrophic consequences.

From everything that I have read and heard it seems clear that the current targets of 5-15% will not be sufficient to ensure we avoid dangerous climate change. I ask that you listen to the science and choose targets based on what is needed, not what is acceptable to business or special interest groups. Given that Australia is going to be more adversely affected than many countries, it seems clear that achieving a global agreement on strong emissions targets would be in our own best interest. It will be difficult to get China, India and other crucial countries on board a global agreement unless we show that we are prepared to make significant reductions.

I was disappointed to see that the government has not learnt from the introduction of emissions trading in Europe. Their experiences clearly showed that artificially capping the price of permits, giving away free permits and having a slow start, can undermine the whole system. How can an emissions trading system work if the biggest polluters are given free permits? To me it seems completely illogical, as it distorts the objective. Of course industries have argued that otherwise there will be carbon leakage and they will be forced offshore. However, I read recently that Professor Garnaut pointed out that giving away free permits will only create protectionism, which in the long run will disadvantage Australia.

During this financial crisis, it also makes good economic sense to invest in renewable energy and green industries. Per a unit of electricity, Wind power and biomass create 2- 4 times as many jobs in Australia as coal fired plants. I have seen several reports that show that investing in green industries will mean more jobs in Australia than a business as usual scenario. I hope that you will realise that setting strong targets and making a transition to a low carbon economy is a great opportunity for Australia. This could be good for the environment and good for our economy. Australia has been a leader in solar technology for a long time, but continually failed to turn our discoveries into industries. This is a fantastic opportunity to develop new industries and create more manufacturing jobs in Australia.

Personally, I define leadership as being able to make tough decisions in the long-term interests of all, even if they are unpopular or difficult to implement. I ask you to show leadership on this issue!

Yours sincerely,

Peter Langlands