

The Secretary

Senate Select Committee on Climate Policy

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SUBMISSION to the Senate Select Committee on Climate Policy

Signatory:

Ross Miller

Submission:

I am deeply concerned about the increasing carbon waste in our atmosphere, causing a global climate change. This is a critical and urgent issue.

An overwhelming number of reports and articles clearly document the evidence that climate change is happening now - and will continue to worsen at a rapid rate if humans do not stop carbon pollution. This is threatening the very survival of our life on earth. Constant scientific findings show that the global warming effect is happening more rapidly than previously expected. The Arctic summer sea ice is now expected to melt completely within the next five years.

There is no doubt amongst a body of over 2000 scientists and experts from around the world who gather periodically to review the existing peer-reviewed literature of the relevant science that climate change is a reality.

" THE SCIENCE OF CLIMATE CHANGE

A joint statement issued by the Australian Academy of Sciences, Royal Flemish Academy of Belgium for Sciences and the Arts, Brazilian Academy of Sciences, Royal Society of Canada, Caribbean Academy of

Sciences, Chinese Academy of Sciences, French Academy of Sciences, German Academy of Natural Scientists Leopoldina, Indian National Science Academy, Indonesian Academy of Sciences, Royal Irish Academy Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei (Italy), Academy of Sciences Malaysia, Academy Council of the Royal Society of New Zealand, Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, and Royal Society (UK).

The work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) represents the consensus of the international scientific community on climate change science. We recognise IPCC as the world's most reliable source of information on climate change and its causes, and we endorse its method of achieving this consensus. Despite increasing consensus on the science underpinning predictions of global climate change, doubts have been expressed recently about the need to mitigate the risks posed by global climate change. We do not consider such doubts justified.

There will always be some uncertainty surrounding the prediction of changes in such a complex system as the world's climate. Nevertheless, we support the IPCC's conclusion that it is at least 90% certain that temperatures will continue to rise, with average global surface temperature projected to increase by between 1.4 and 5.8°C above 1990 levels **by 2100**. This increase will be accompanied by rising sea levels, more intense precipitation events in some countries, increased risk of drought in others, and adverse effects on agriculture, health and water resources."

Recently, scientists at the climate congress in Copenhagen found greenhouse gas pollution was exceeding the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's worst case scenarios.

Key Point One - with specific address to - the choice of emissions trading as the central policy to reduce Australia's carbon pollution, taking into account the need to:

- i. reduce carbon pollution at the lowest economic cost,**
- ii. put in place long-term incentives for investment in clean energy and low-emission technology, and**
- iii. contribute to a global solution to climate change;**

What will be the future cost of unmitigated climate change, versus the costs of acting now?

Strong visionary leadership is required to invest in, manage and promote clean energy industries, development and management of soil and forest carbon sinks, and the multitude of energy saving initiatives which are well developed and already marketed .

The cost of acting - A recent ACF-ACTU report, "Green Gold Rush" identified six key green industries – renewable energy, energy efficiency, sustainable water industries, biomaterials, green buildings and waste recycling – that could grow an additional 500,000 green jobs by 2030 and take on a significant proportion of global market share.

With progressive leadership Australia has a lot to gain. However, in recent years, jobs and promising businesses have been lost overseas: fuel cells to Germany, solar power to China, solar thermal to the

US, wind turbines to the EU and waste industries to Britain. We have the opportunity to become global leaders and formidable competitors in the “new green economy” ensuring that Australians have a thriving future. We will fall behind and be locked out of this new economy if we don’t commit to the developments now.

A new green deal would help us through the current downturn while building a strong, low-carbon future. It would go a long way towards building a more robust and resilient economy for Australia, while positioning for leadership in the green industries and jobs of the future.

The costs of not acting – (to name a few)

The oceans rising two meters and displacing millions of people around the world – triggering mass evacuations and huge resource shortages. The majority of Australians live near to the coast, ie in the most vulnerable areas to a sea rise.

Mass extinction of ecosystems, starting with the fragile iconic and incredibly precious Great Barrier Reef, the magnificent Kakadu World Heritage Site, and the rapid melting of the polar caps – condemning such key stone species such as Polar Bears.

Worsening of bush fires, as the drought in Australia intensifies. The loss of huge sections of arable lands we have to produce foods.

The increased spread of insect bourn tropical diseases – as temperate regions become warm enough for them to occupy.

An increase in severe and unpredictable storm activity – causing millions of dollars of damage, and loss of life.

These are costs we cannot quantify, the enormity is tremendous and frightening. Economically - a review commissioned by the British government, compiled by Nicholas Stern, former chief economist at the World Bank last year, has estimated that the cost of unmitigated climate change could be as much as \$7 trillion in the next 40 years. That's about 20% of all the money in the world.

The extremely scary piece of information is accompanied by a polite suggestion that we spend 1% of the world's money right now, in order to avoid that fate. "We can pay one percent more now," Stern explained, "We can grow and be green."

N.B

In a somewhat ironic twist; temperature increases caused by global warming are also seeming to provide some benefit to the Australian coal industry.

The Daily Times in Lahore, Pakistan , reports that hydroelectric power generation has plummeted 6,500 megawatts to 150 megawatts: close to a 98% reduction – because of crippling drought conditions. A leading environmental blog, “Treehugger” “has revealed that the Australian coal industry is offering to come to the rescue. In a letter to Sindh Minister for Mines and Mineral Resources, Irfanullah Khan Marwat, Australian coal has seized on the Pakistan climate crisis and

expressed interest in setting up two 1000 MW coal fired power plants in Thar, which will produce more carbon pollution, perpetuating the severe climatic conditions.

Key Point 2 - with specific address to - the relative contributions to overall emission reduction targets from complementary measures such as renewable energy feed-in laws, energy efficiency and the protection or development of terrestrial carbon stores such as native forests and soils;

The Rudd Government's target to reduce Australia's carbon pollution by just 5 to 15 per cent by 2020, if adopted globally, would condemn Australia to a future of more frequent and extreme weather events - more deadly bushfires[1], costly floods and cyclones. These targets are far too weak. The Government's 5-15% target is not at all adequate to avoid dangerous climate change. We should instead commit to reducing Australia's greenhouse pollution 50% by 2020 (on 1990 levels).

I implore you to recognise the stark reality which must not be ignored – humanity cannot survive on a planet with high levels of carbon pollution in the atmosphere. The devastating effects of climate change will take place in our lifetime, and the only chance we have to mitigate them is to make the changes now!

Australia is in the perfect position to tackle greenhouse pollution, climate change and energy insecurity. We have huge potential to stop wasting energy and become more energy efficient. We have abundant sources of clean, renewable energy. The only way for Australia to demonstrate a serious commitment to addressing climate change is to develop a plan for the transition from coal and invest heavily in renewable energy technology.

A “new generation coal” touted to be a cleaner option, remains highly controversial as it requires 20% more energy in associated processes; therefore creating additional serious environmental problems in connection with coal mining such as destruction of habitat and poisoning of waterways. Australia's 230 million tonnes annual coal exports contribute 550 million tonnes of carbon dioxide to the world's greenhouse gas burden each year. It is utterly and completely clear that this industry will continue to pollute our atmosphere until we as a nation realise the true urgency and significance of a rapid rise in global temperature – and invest strongly in renewable energies.

A landmark report released on 5-Aug-2008 by The Australian National University reveals experts have underestimated the role Australian native forests play in storing carbon, and highlights a significant opportunity for Australia to cut its greenhouse emissions by around 24 per cent by ending the logging of our native forests.

The report shows that Australia's native forests have a far larger carbon stock than previously recognised and that the carbon stock of forests subjected to commercial logging store significantly less carbon, typically less than half the carbon stock of natural, undisturbed forests.

Key Point 3 - with specific address to - whether the Government's Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme is environmentally effective, in particular with regard to the adequacy or otherwise of the Government's 2020 and 2050 greenhouse gas emission reduction targets in avoiding dangerous climate change

As I have already stated, reduction targets of 5-15% are far too weak. The Government's 5-15% target is not at all adequate to avoid dangerous climate change. We should instead commit to reducing Australia's greenhouse pollution by 50% by 2020 (on 1990 levels).

The Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS) currently proposed by the Government is an unjust scheme, which discounts the commitment of Australians who are making energy savings in their own lives. The scheme design over-compensates industry polluters at the expense of the community and environment. . Because the CPRS imposes a floor beyond which emissions cannot fall, the action individuals and small businesses take to reduce energy will not reduce Australia's total greenhouse emissions further than the Government's weak target of 5-15%. In fact their action will only make room for industry to increase their emissions under that cap.

This is not only unjust, it is unethical and immoral, and disgusts me.

The CPR scheme should be designed to send a clear message to industry polluters, that Australian industry needs to commit to strong carbon pollution reductions to begin to mitigate the most serious consequences of climate change.

This is also an incredible opportunity for Australia to start to refocus our economy to take advantage of new job opportunities and industry growth in the renewable sector, at a time when unemployment levels are reaching new highs during the financial crisis.

Key Point 4. - with specific address to - an appropriate mechanism for determining what a fair and equitable contribution to the global emission reduction effort would be;

Carbon polluters have had many years to recalibrate business models and maintain competitiveness through the laws of market-centric strategy and foresight

Natural Australian assets such as the Barrier Reef and Kakadu are unable to be adequately valued ... because they are priceless.

It is completely unreasonable to prioritise short to mid-term vested interests in stalling the carbon reductions industry, to prioritise the generation of these industries wealth. Carbon reduction MUST begin to be taken seriously.

We all need to do our fair share on climate change, large carbon polluting companies included. The proposed Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme will see Australian taxpayers funding the activities of

companies that are fuelling climate change to the amount of \$9 billion in the next three years. That's over \$1000 for every household in Australia. It is up to you as the Senate this year to stop big business from passing the problem of climate change onto Australian citizens.

What is fair and equitable is the moral and ethical right for all Australians, and fellow people of the world, to be given a future free of the intense suffering climate change will bring. The cause and effects are clearly documented and endorsed by 2000 experts and scientists from around the world. The solutions are many, and will greatly benefit the economy.

It is strong clear leadership will take us forwards into a safe and healthy future.

Key Point 5 - with specific address to - whether the design of the proposed scheme will send appropriate investment signals for green collar jobs, research and development, and the manufacturing and service industries, taking into account permit allocation, leakage, compensation mechanisms and additionality issues.

We need massive global climate change action to protect our nation. As a developed nation we have the advantage of an organised society, we are relatively affluent, and capable of making the necessary adjustments to mitigate climate change. Strong action on climate change will create millions of new Green Collar jobs, not destroy them as the big polluters claim.{2}

Now more than ever before, we live in a global community. What we fail to do nationally, we also fail to do internationally. Australia needs to step up to the plate in international negotiations, and endeavour to develop strong carbon reduction caps in line with other countries. We should not be spoilers, but strong and visionary leaders at the international level.

Australia's weak target is undermining efforts to form crucial international agreement and must be improved before December's important UN Conference on Climate Change in Copenhagen. This is the best – and possibly last – chance the world will have to solve the climate crisis.

Sincerely yours,

Ross Miller

1A joint CSIRO/Bureau of Meteorology study of the impact of climate change in bushfires found parts of Victoria faced up to 65% more days of extreme fire risk by 2020 and 230% more by mid-century.

2According to CSIRO economic modeling, 2.7 million new jobs will be created in Australia by 2025 if we set course to become carbon neutral by 2050.