

To Senators on the Senate Select Committee on Climate Policy,

INTRODUCTION

The Federal Government's Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme [CPRS] is both premature and inadequate. Premature, because there is considerable doubt whether man-made carbon pollution is a major causal factor in climate change; inadequate, because the target is weak and the strategy rewards polluters. The world's scientists are unable to agree whether climate change is due to human activities or not. Although the official IPCC viewpoint is that it is, there is significant disagreement with that from sceptical and equally well-accredited scientists. What is more concerning, the IPCC scientists not only refuse to engage with the sceptics, but refuse to answer questions challenging apparent flaws in their own arguments. This smells of political intervention to me, and strongly indicates we need to disconnect climate change from carbon emissions reduction.

There is no doubt, however, that we must address both, because climate change presents a major threat to life as we know it, and carbon emissions, whether they are causing climate change or not, are certainly having a negative effect on our health and the health of the planet, and, equally certainly, we are going to run out of carbon-based fossil fuels.

OBJECTIVES

From the above argument, we must define and implement strategies aimed at achieving two independent objectives:-

- (1) Changes which will enable us to live with the effects of climate change with minimal loss of life, livelihood and economic well-being;
- (2) Changes which will dramatically reduce both our dependence on carbon-based fuels, and our carbon emissions.

CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGIES

There is no doubt that our climate is changing, or that the direction and rate of this change, if they continue, pose serious threats to our way of life. I believe we must act on the worst-case assumption that both direction and rate will continue unabated. This means we must now develop and implement a comprehensive strategic plan, which must include provisions for at least the following elements:-

- Water supply, including transport of large volumes over long distances
- Land use, including action to eliminate inappropriate crops and processes
- Climate-proofing buildings, transport systems and industries
- Siting of residences and industries
- Population growth, specifically actions to limit population to sustainable levels

EMISSIONS REDUCTION STRATEGIES

Although an Emissions Trading Scheme [ETS] is one of many important tools the government can use to reduce Australia's emissions, the decision on which tool(s) to use must be the result of careful analysis of all options. So long as it sets a strong target and sends a clear price signal to the market, a well-designed ETS could help dramatically reduce Australia's emissions. However, a badly designed emissions trading scheme will prevent the economic transformation Australia needs, at a cost to both the economy and the environment. As it stands, the CPRS proposed by the Government is a badly designed scheme that will be worse than useless. It is agreed by most commentators that it provides an unacceptably weak target, and a design which over-compensates polluters at the expense of the community and the environment. Other emissions reduction strategies which must be considered include:-

- a direct tax on carbon emissions
- a mandatory renewable energy target for power generation
- a subsidy for use of renewable energy in businesses, homes and vehicles
- mandatory energy efficiency standards for homes and commercial buildings

- investment to make public transport more attractive to users, less dependent on non-renewable fuels, and more fuel-efficient
- banning the logging of Australia's native forests

Although the first of these options is an alternative to an ETS, all the other listed strategies should be pursued regardless of whether an ETS is initiated or not.

SUMMARY

Two dangerous assumptions are inherent in the proposal for the CPRS: that emissions of carbon dioxide from human activities are causing climate change, and that an ETS is the most effective way to reduce such emissions. Neither assumption has been satisfactorily proven to be true, so it is essential that we do two things as soon as possible:-

- (1) de-couple emissions reduction from the effects of climate change, and
- (2) manage each of these areas separately, and by the most effective means available to us.

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