

Senators,

The weak target is only one of the flaws in the Government's CPRS. Senators will all (I hope) be familiar with Guy Pearce's Quarterly Essay "Quarry Vision" describing the undermining of an effective response by governments' blind support of the coal industry. His conclusion that the proposed scheme may result in NO domestic pollution reduction is persuasive. In NSW we have seen a perfect example of this in the planned extension of Peabody-Metropolitan's Helensburgh colliery to undermine Woronora Reservoir, their previous longwall block having fractured the catchment and streambed of its Waratah Rivulet tributary. Sydney's water catchments are so sacred that we are not allowed to walk there yet longwall subsidence cracking is shrugged off as collateral damage.

It is not as if the Rudd Government has the excuse of economic duress or flagging public support to make a strong pollution reduction commitment. We are repeatedly assured that Australia will be one of the countries most affected by climate change but least affected by the economic meltdown, having the fiscal strength to steer stimulus investment into a sustainable direction upon recovery. The Government has failed to grasp this opportunity. Indeed the slowdown in resource demand releases previously overstretched skills and labour resources to build the necessary renewable energy infrastructure.

Public support for climate responsibility is strong with the evidence of extreme climatic events accumulating week by week in bushfires, floods and collapsing ice shelves. With a secure majority in the House of Reps and encouraged by The Greens, only Senators Fielding and Xenophon stand in the way of strong decisive action in the face of kneejerk opposition reaction. The Government has the right to expect cooperation from those Senators with the option of a double dissolution hovering in the background.

One course for the Senate is to get a response under way by passing the CPRS bill with amendments that provide for the reduction target to be updated year by year as further evidence accumulates, without encumbering compensation. That intention needs to be incorporated into our Copenhagen commitments. Consequent uncertainty in business investment is totally justifiable; it surely represents the uncertain future for all of us and reinforces the necessity of adopting the precautionary principle in business planning. We do not want and cannot afford expansive investment in mineral export infrastructure, creating overseas pollution that will cripple the viability of cities, ecosystems and agriculture in Australia.

Murray and Joy Scott