

Our economy, environment, and society as a whole will suffer greatly if carbon emissions are not reduced substantially right now. A 5% reduction is not sufficient to make enough of a dent in the concentration of CO₂ that is warming our planet, raising sea levels, causing severe droughts and storms, creating natural disasters and refugees in places such as Fiji, causing coral bleaching, population declines in all kinds of animals (including turtles, fishes and seabirds), and threatening rural communities throughout Australia.

Australia has been blessed with massive reserves of high quality coal. Although it is tempting to capitalise on this resource at a time when large there is high demand from developing countries such as China and India, it is morally reprehensible to continue with business as usual. There is strong science supporting the link between carbon dioxide concentrations and climate, and the negative impacts of climate change. To carry on without substantially reducing emissions is to condone the above impacts, and for whose sake? If for the sake of the economy, it will certainly not be better off in 10 years time under predicted increases in emissions, no matter how much money is made in the short-term.

I recognise that it is very difficult to elicit long-term change within a four year political term, and that the current global financial crisis is viewed by some as a reason not to reduce emissions. However, the downturn represents an opportunity to examine the way we do business, to become more efficient and take up the slack before the eventual upturn, so that we can best capitalise in the recovering market. Successful small and large businesses have done this during previous downturns, and are doing this now as we speak. This is our opportunity to invest in sustainable industries, as there is currently demand for clean energy and this will only grow.

A focussed stimulus package to encourage sustainable industries and discourage polluting industry will allow the economy to shift naturally, with less impact to GDP over the transition period, and allow larger CO₂ reduction targets to be met.

I encourage you to consider the cost of not reducing emissions more substantially. Loss of the Great Barrier Reef, without consideration of any other of the warming-related impacts is too much for the world, or Australia to bear.

Sincerely

Conor Jones PhD, Bsc