

To Senators on the Senate Select Committee on Climate Policy,

I am appalled at the blatant greenwash which is your proposed Emissions Trading Scheme. The Rudd government was elected on the promise of taking action where Howard had refused to admit there was even a problem, let alone a threatened global catastrophe.

After reading Guy Pearse's Quarterly Essay I now realise that this government has conned us and slipped into the previous government's shoes of supporting polluters and undermining the public's will to take real action. The web of collegial contacts and revolving doors between government and politicians' offices and the private mining and energy sector is the real story and until something is done about it we will continue to get such pathetic gestures masquerading as 'a fair balance'. The ridiculously low target of 5%, the exemptions to polluting industries and the cynical action of exporting carbon reduction credits are as the Greens say 'worse than useless'.

It is an international disgrace when other countries are making real gestures. Australia faces being globally disgraced for coal protectionism as the US has been over wheat. Australia might as well opt out of international negotiations and say 'sorry, we're with the polluters'. At least then we could have an honest public debate. As Pearse points out, the sky will not fall down if coal exports are phased out. The sector accounts for relatively little of GDP and of jobs. Manufacturing has lost many more jobs without such government protection.

Yet in this case what the government is doing is not just protecting one industry sector at the expense of another (renewable energy), it is also refusing the call of the world's scientists to take decisive action NOW. It is irresponsible in the extreme towards the planet and future generations. Its expressed faith in 'clean coal' is dismissed as a fantasy by experts.

We have had worldwide media attention to our bushfires, droughts, depleted waterways and other climactic events. The world knows that Australia is already being seriously affected by climate change AND that it has the natural resources for the development of solar, wind and geothermal power. It is blindingly obvious that a responsible government would do all in its power to develop this sector and minimise or phase out the damaging industries. It would follow the advice of expert scientists rather than giving in to the lobbying of the polluters.

The commitment must start now, not in future decades. Emissions reduction means deep cuts now and a commitment to decisive measures such as no new coal mines or coal fired power stations.

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