

THE COMMONSENSE MANIFESTO

Chapter xx – Making the Environment our First Priority

1. The Problem

It defies commonsense that the peoples of the world, including Australians, should go on degrading the environment at the rate we have been in recent decades.

2. The Proposed Commonsense Solution

Surely it is commonsense to rectify the above problem by simply making the Department of the Environment the most senior department of the government, and henceforth requiring that department's prior approval of all proposed government spending?

3. The Brief Justification

Without producing a detailed treatise on the subject, the basic reasoning behind the above Commonsense Solution is as follows. Of course, detailed analysis might identify the need for some modification of the proposed commonsense solution, but its basic tenor needs to be kept intact.

Reference is made to the recently completed worldwide study of the extent of degradation of the environment by mankind commissioned by the United Nations at a cost to society of about US\$25 million. That study has concluded that:

- A. Xxxx
- B. Yyyy

Whilst some will challenge many of the findings of that study, it should nevertheless serve as a warning that we are degrading our environment in a way that commonsense says is unsustainable. Someone has to make a start at 'breaking the mould' of the ways in which we treat environmental considerations in all that we do. Australia has one of the cleanest environments in the world. We happily exploit our 'clean, green' image when it comes to exporting foodstuffs to fussy importers like the Japanese, yet we behave like primitive beasts when it comes to clearing our few remaining natural forests, and we waste water so shamefully that we have degraded some of our major river systems to the point where they are literally dying.

Australia punches above its weight in terms our international prestige and influence. We are therefore well placed from all perspectives to set an example to world by giving environmental considerations overriding importance in all that we do.

Hence we should make the Department of the Environment our most senior and most powerful government department at the federal level.

4. Further Justification for this Commonsense Proposal

Of course, the initial reaction from the community at large will be one of shock, horror, fear and trepidation. Many will genuinely believe such a move to be sheer lunacy. But is it?

Sure, to hand such enormous power to the ‘Greenie’ bureaucrats who currently run and staff the Department of the Environment – and their fellow travelers – may well be economic suicide. **But what if the department were suddenly transformed into a totally responsible, commercially and economically focused unit which just happens to be highly sympathetic to the environment?**

Your Editor contends that authority and responsibility must always go together. Any separation of the two leads to unbalanced decision making. Hence, if the Department of the Environment were to be given the power proposed herein, that department would logically then be required to accept full responsibility for ALL the consequences of its actions. It would come under enormous pressure from all quarters to do so. And it would almost certainly rise to the occasion, especially as competent, upwardly mobile bureaucrats from other – now less prestigious – departments migrated across to the Department of the Environment.

In adopting this commonsense policy, Australia would lead the world – just as it has done on several previous occasions.