

Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme legislation

I am writing to as a concerned citizen so you can address my concerns regarding the Australian government's lack of action on climate change.

During the 2007 Federal election, Kevin Rudd committed to taking action to address climate change, stating that "Australia now stands ready to assume its responsibility ... Climate change is the defining challenge of our generation."

I was very pleased that a Rudd Labor government was committing to taking action on climate change after over 10 years of denial and obfuscation on climate change by the previous Howard government.

However, the Rudd Government's draft Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS) tabled on 10 March 2009, an emissions trading scheme promoted as Australia's central policy on climate change, is manifestly inadequate for reducing Australia's carbon emissions.

Its fundamental flaws are:

- The unconditional greenhouse target of 5% emission reductions by 2020 is far lower than the 25% to 40% target range flagged at the United Nations Bali Convention on climate change in 2008.
- It encourages the growth of highly polluting Energy Intensive Trade Exposed (EITE) industries' (such as aluminium smelters) by allocating them 25% of permits free of charge, increasing to 45% by 2020. This is in direct conflict with the recommendations in the final Garnaut report.
- Free permits are given to coal power over the first 5 years. This provides windfall profits to polluters and encourages dirty coal power to continue in the short term.
- Permits are property rights instead of temporary licences. This means that polluters who get them will be paid compensation in the future if more stringent emission reductions are introduced.
- There is no limit on overseas offsets, so Australia's emissions could increase and emission permits bought from overseas to "offset" them.
- The cap on the CO2 price of around \$40/tonne for the first 5 years excludes renewable energy in the absence of other incentives.
- 'The high "cap" is also a "floor" so emission reductions by households will be simply on sold by power stations to other polluters, resulting in no actual emission reductions.
- The greenhouse gas CH4 from animal agriculture and Nitrous Oxide from animal waste needs to be addressed. Also the fact that these agriculture practices are effecting our precious water reserves, and also using excessive amounts of water for the raising of animals and also for the dairy industry.

The combined effect of these flaws is that Australia's action carbon emissions will rise by 2020 rather than fall. The CPRS legislation fails to address climate change for these reasons so I do not support it.

Scientists at the recent International Scientific Congress on Climate Change in Copenhagen on 10-12 March 2009, scientists stated that:

Recent observations confirm that, given high rates of observed emissions, the worst-case IPCC scenario trajectories (or even worse) are being realised. For many key parameters, the climate system is already moving beyond the patterns of natural variability within which our society and economy have developed and thrived. These parameters include global mean surface temperature, sea-level rise, ocean and ice sheet dynamics, ocean acidification, and extreme climatic events. There is a significant risk that many of the trends will accelerate, leading to an increasing risk of abrupt or irreversible climatic shifts."

Source: http://climatecongress.ku.dk/newsroom/congress_key_messages/

In Australia, we are experiencing extreme weather events such as devastating floods in Queensland and the hottest day on record in Victoria on 7 March 2009, which contributed to the severity of the disastrous bushfires on the same day. We are also experiencing dramatic reductions in rainfall across southern Australia. The Murray Darling river system is in jeopardy and water supplies for major cities such as Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney are at risk.

The Copenhagen Scientific Congress also found that:

Recent observations show that dangerous climate change will cause serious social disruption, particularly with societies that are highly vulnerable to even modest levels of climate change, with poor nations and communities particularly at risk. Temperature rises above 2C will be very difficult for contemporary societies to cope with.

- Rapid, sustained, and effective mitigation based on coordinated global and regional action is required to avoid "dangerous climate change" regardless of how it is defined.
- Weaker targets for 2020 increase the risk of crossing tipping points and make the task of meeting 2050 targets more difficult. Delay in initiating effective mitigation actions increases significantly the long-term social and economic costs of both adaptation and mitigation.
- There is no excuse for inaction. We already have many tools and approaches, (economic, technological, behavioural, management) to deal effectively with the climate change challenge.
- These tools must be vigorously and widely implemented to achieve the societal transformation required to decarbonise economies.
- A wide range of benefits will flow from a concerted effort to alter our energy economy now, including sustainable energy job growth, reductions in the health and economic costs of climate change, and the restoration of ecosystems and revitalisation of ecosystem services.

To achieve the societal transformation required to meet the climate change challenge, we must overcome a number of significant constraints and seize critical opportunities.

I strongly urge the Australian government to build on a growing public desire for governments to act on climate change; remove implicit and explicit subsidies; reduce the influence of vested interests that increase emissions and reduce resilience; enable the shifts from ineffective governance and weak institutions to innovative leadership in government, the private sector and civil society; and engage society in the transition to norms and practices that foster genuine sustainability.

Specifically, I urge the government to adopt policies and programs to:

- Transition to 100% renewable energy by 2020, creating new industries and jobs in doing so.
- Achieve immediate reductions in greenhouse gas emissions every year forthwith, this includes the potent greenhouse gas CH₄, nitrous oxide and other gases from animal agriculture.
- Adopt a target of 300ppm atmospheric CO₂ for a safe climate future.
- Adopt targets of 80% reduction on 1990 levels by 2020 and zero carbon emissions by 2030.
- Provide federal funding for increased public transport infrastructure and services and cycling infrastructure in urban and rural areas.
- Ensure all funding programs for the Australian car industry are contingent on building low emissions electric drive train vehicles only.
- Place a moratorium on building any new coal-fired power stations

- Introduce a national gross metered uncapped feed in tariff in 2009
- Cease logging of Australian native forests to protect the carbon they store and effect an immediate transition to available plantation wood supplies.
- Assist farmers who are presently growing farm animals to adopt new organic agricultural practices so organic food can also act as a carbon sink.

Please note that I will be carefully assessing the Rudd Labor government's credentials on taking real action on climate change at the next election as a major factor in deciding who I vote for.

Yours faithfully

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