

Additional Comments by Coalition Senators

Coalition Senators agree with this report's recommendations and whilst acknowledging the positives of these bills as outlined in the report, we are of the view that until the development of the Emissions Trading Scheme is completed, the introduction of these bills would result in unnecessary confusion.

Coalition Senators agree that the climate is changing and accept this may be the result of human activity, but also acknowledge debate on other possible causes, which include, inter alia, greenhouse emissions, changes in the orbit of the Earth, and sun spot activity, and we note that cyclical climate change has been an ongoing feature of history of the planet.

In relation to comments made in paragraphs 1.9 to 1.16 in regard to the Howard Government's record on climate change, Coalition Senators believe the Coalition Government took a leadership role on Climate Change and any view that early interest was not sustained completely ignores the plethora of positive outcomes achieved through the highly active Australian Greenhouse Office and other relevant agencies.

The Coalition Government's strong leadership role on the challenges of Climate Changes occurred on a national and international level with investments of \$2 billion in climate change programs. They included hundreds of millions of dollars on solar and wind energy, developing of new technology to make cleaner and more efficient fossil fuels and ways to capture and store greenhouse gases to stop them going into the atmosphere. For example:

- The \$500 million Low Emissions Technology Demonstration Fund, which aimed at leveraging \$1 billion from industry to develop technologies to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- The \$100 million Renewable Energy Development Initiative, which provided competitive grants to support the strategic development of renewable energy technologies.

During the leadership of the Howard Government, Australia could proudly say it was one of the few countries that were on track to reach its internationally agreed target for greenhouse gas emissions. Australia's record proved to the international community that there was a way forward that allowed for emission cuts and economic growth. During its term in office, Coalition climate change strategies saw Australia forecast to save 85 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions a year by 2010, while the economy was expected to almost double.

These savings were the equivalent of taking every one of Australia's 14 million cars, trucks and buses off the road – and stopping all rail, air and shipping activity – while still providing for major economic growth.

Even with such achievements the Coalition government continued to take seriously the issues of climate change and its role in reducing the global greenhouse signature.

Under the Coalition, Australia was a joint signatory in the first global agreement between the United States, China, India, Japan and the Republic of Korea – the Asia Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate – where member countries worked together to use technological solutions to bring about the dramatic cuts to greenhouse gas emissions that the world needs to tackle climate change. Coalition Senators would like to express their regret that the Labor Government has axed funding to this valuable program.

Within the relevant areas of renewable energy, the Coalition also displayed strong leadership with the Mandatory Renewable Energy Target Scheme as discussed in this report. This leading policy from the Coalition Government has, in no small part, helped contribute to the growth and development of Australia's current renewable energy market.

Coalition Senators are also of the opinion that consideration should be given to extending the MRET to include all clean energy technologies. In essence the MRET should encourage the development of all low emission energy production markets in Australia equally, with the ultimate aim of reducing Australia's overall emission levels. Australia's current energy mix means that the positive effects of MRET are restricted to a relatively small portion of the energy market. Clean energy production technologies deal with the fossil fuel energy sources that currently make up the largest portion of Australia's energy mix. Clean energy technology's aim at producing energy with low emissions which result in the same outcome achieved by renewable energy, albeit from a finite resource. Including clean energy technologies into the MRET would extend the incentives for low emission energy production to a far greater portion of Australia's energy mix consequently delivering far more of the MRET's desired reduction in emissions.

Senator Dr Alan Eggleston
Deputy Chair