

**Submission to the Senate standing Committee on Economics on the Renewable Energy Legislation Amendment (Renewable Power Percentage) Bill 2008.
From Doctors for the Environment Australia.**

www.dea.org.au

Doctors for the Environment Australia (DEA) has major concerns about the expected effects of climate change on human health and well being. We have recently released nationally and internationally a report on this topic. (Climate Change Health Check 2020, 7th April 2008. See www.dea.org.au). It is therefore appropriate that we submit to this Senate Committee to emphasise that a significant reduction in greenhouse gas emissions is urgent and the only way that this can be quickly accomplished is by encouraging energy saving and expanding renewable energy provision. The situation is urgent because recent scientific reports are showing that the harmful effects of climate change are arising much faster than anticipated from IPCC data. There is increasing danger that climate change may become irreversible

The health costs of failing to tackle the core cause of climate change, namely the burning of fossil fuels, will be immense. These costs have not adequately been addressed in the UK's Stern Report or (so far) in the deliberations of Australia's Garnaut Review.

The health aspects of climate change add to the economic argument that early action to curtail greenhouse gas emissions will be less costly to the Australian community than continuing with a 'business-as-usual' approach which is providing lip-service to the problem by acknowledging the reality of climate change without implementing resolute actions to deal with it.

DEA is a voluntary organisation of medical doctors formed in 2001 with members in all States and Territories. The aim of the organisation is to inform and educate the public, the medical profession and policy makers about the relationships between health and the environment. Our priority issue is the health effects of climate change. DEA is a member of the International Society of Doctors for the Environment. Our organisation has members who serve on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and on other international scientific committees concerned with global environmental health.

DEA commends the decision of the Australian government to ensure that 20 percent of Australia's electricity is derived from renewable sources by 2020. It is essential that this goal is achieved.

The aim of the Renewable Energy Legislation Amendment (Renewable Power Percentage) Bill 2008 is to accelerate the implementation of the government's renewable energy commitment, so action commences in 2008 rather than 2010. This is highly commendable

The Renewable Energy (Electricity) Act 2001, to be amended in the proposed legislation, expires in December 2020. Given the lead time required to finance and to develop new renewable energy projects, it is likely that under the Act new projects might only generate returns for about nine years, until the 2020 expiry of the legislation. DEA requests that the Senate Committee examine if the fixed life (until

2020) of the MRET might act as a deterrent to renewable energy investment. If so, the 2008 amendment might be able to deal with this problem by removing the fixed 2020 completion date of the MRET.

From a health perspective it is vital that the government's renewable energy targets are achieved. Australia cannot afford to find halfway through the implementation process that the target may not be achieved. Carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere because of inadequate legislation cannot be retrieved. DEA submits that energy shortfall charges in the legislation must be high enough to ensure success of the MRET. We ask that the Senate Committee examine the shortfall charges in the legislation to be amended in the 2008 Bill by asking if the shortfall charges are adequate

These are issues for the future health and wellbeing of the Australian community and DEA hopes the Committee will not compromise in working to strengthen the Renewable Energy Legislation Amendment (Renewable Power Percentage) Bill 2008 to ensure that Australia's emerging renewable energy industry receives certainty and has confidence in the legislative process that supports it.

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