

Submission to:

**Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications:
Inquiry into the Government's Direct Action Plan**

Submission by: Joe Boin, Australian Citizen

19 January, 2014

To: The Secretary

Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Email <ec.sen@aph.gov.au>

Dear Secretary

I am an Australian citizen, a former Secondary Science teacher and currently manager of a Psychology practice in Ballarat. As a teacher, I have always taught about the balance of nature, including the Greenhouse Effect - the phenomenon that makes our planet habitable by keeping in just enough solar heat. Without this increased temperature Earth would be too cold for most forms of life - particularly humans. What concerns me is that the balance of this system is delicate and is being affected by excess emissions into the atmosphere from human activity. What concerns me more is that the Australian Government shows little awareness of our country's part in this and even less inclination to act towards mitigation.

I do not intend to reiterate the evidence on this matter. It is readily available and peer-reviewed by responsible Climate Scientists.

I am concerned that the Government gives little indication to the average Australian that it has seen this evidence. If it has seen this evidence, it seems to be largely ignoring it in favour of advice from vested interests. Surely the interests of the nation would indicate that we should act strongly to abate emissions, which are threatening our future climatic safety.

The argument that we are too small to matter in the Worldview is not acceptable. When we recently made a significant move towards action (the Carbon Tax - which may or may not have been the best option), the world was watching and applauding. As world citizens we must do our bit, not wait for others to act first.

Economics may be a problem at the moment, but the Economic System is man-made and therefore controlled by man. The Natural System, and its rules of balance, is not under our control, and can overwhelm our Economic System if we ignore its demands. We must act responsibly for a safe future. The evidence of the weather extremes we have recently experienced - extreme cold in the Northern Hemisphere and the heat waves down here - indicates that we cannot afford not to act. The costs of allowing things to get worse - both economic and humanitarian - are huge.

The questions I ask the Senate Committee to consider are

- (1) Is the current legislation effective in abating emissions?
- (2) Is "direct action" likely to result in an improvement over the current situation?
- (3) Is "direct action" likely to result in a deterioration of the current situation?

My concern is that the current system, though it may or may not be the best one, is currently functioning. The impression I have (and I am not alone) is that the new Government is determined to dismantle the current system because of political policy, not because it is against our future interests. To say that there was a voter mandate to "kill the Carbon Tax" is opportunistic and cherry-picking from the circumstances that resulted in the change of Government. To act to cut living expenses at any cost is irresponsible. It is understandable that the average citizen looks at his/her living costs and wants them as low as possible. It is irresponsible for a Government to accede to that pressure when it has a future view which indicates that short-term expense (albeit economically painful) is for the long-term benefit of all.

Although nothing about "Direct Action" has yet been tested, I am concerned that there has been insufficient explanation of what it involves. It has a limited budget that will be paid directly by taxpayers rather than by the major polluters who pay for it under the current scheme. I am surprised that a business-based Government promotes an abatement system that is centrally funded rather than one which uses market forces to achieve its goals.

As with the Science of climate change, the Government must obtain professional advice on the effectiveness of its schemes. Assurances from politicians, who are not accredited experts, are not enough. There should be funding for public awareness and community programs to develop solutions on a local basis. What are the proposals for Carbon Farming and other initiatives that seem to be lapsing? I feel that I am being "patted on the head" and told "not to worry".

I would have more faith in a system that takes into account the benefits of the existing scheme (it has been tested) and eliminates its deficiencies, replacing them with better alternatives. The existing scheme started out very tentatively and was about to be strengthened, based on an evaluation process. Throwing it out and starting again is surely going to delay real progress. The situation is urgent and it's time for effective action, not political posturing.

As a concerned voter, I want the Committee to recommend that

- the existing pricing scheme be retained and improved
- the benefits of Direct Action be incorporated into an improved version of the existing pricing scheme.

Sincerely,

Joe Boin