

SUBMISSION

The Abbott Government's attacks on Australia's environment, and their effects on our natural heritage and future prosperity:

(a) *...attacks on carbon pricing, Clean Energy Finances Corporation, Australian Renewable Energy Agency and renewable energy target, Climate Change Authority and Climate Commission...*

The cumulative impacts on these targets is demonstrably anti-environment aimed at maintaining the status quo of 20th century fossil fuel technology in the pursuit of limitless and increased profits. The environment is being sacrificed to the expediency and profit of financially powerful interests, supported and justified by a destructive, contradictory ideology. These contradictions expose the gaping disparities and fallacies in espoused free market principles and small government when established fossil fuelled industries over-rides new, improved, renewable energy industries arising to challenge the hegemony of corporations and developers, and the government attacks and seeks to destroy any new competition in the market place. The conclusion cannot be avoided that the present government's attacks on emerging, energy proficient, proven technology, is one of outright hypocrisy. Such subversive tactics to eliminate alternative energy industries which uncritically benefit the nation and largely our entire planet, should be deemed as criminal, not merely a moral corruption of values.

Climate change denial is being used by fossil fuel proponents as a red-herring subterfuge for continued mining and energy industries, heedless of costs to the natural and social environments.

For instance, rising carbon levels being absorbed by the oceans are risking the breakdown of whole linkages of the food chain as common food sources for pelagic fish up the food chain are being put at risk from the calcium dissolving in such genera as molluscs. Even ignoring Climate Change, the mere fact that increases in acidity from excess carbon in our oceans is an additional means in conjunction with other degrading elements, to destroy an important food source for around 3 billion people on this planet, apart from ultimate loss of many of their livelihoods, should give pause for critical thought. Shouldn't we, in all conscience, consider ameliorating this situation more important than making vast wealth from coal mining and gas extraction - which does not benefit our nation because the adverse impacts are global and from which we are not separate. We need to be responsible – and accountable - for our actions when we deliberately ignore the degrading environmental impacts of which we are the source. Australia is regarded as a vast quarry, open to rapacious exploitation for financial gain.

There is a clear indication that self-interest and the lure of power to be wielded unchallenged in political high places has spawned and dictated the present budget policies of the Federal and some State Governments.

The Abbott Business Advisory Council adviser, Maurice Newman's recent remarks on a threat of 'global cooling' is the latest in a series of statements that very clearly indicate a poor grasp of climate science, whilst at the same time showing a lamentable lack of logical reasoning. If global cooling were indeed a reality, then why attack such climate bodies as the Climate Change Authority and

Climate Commission. Such contentious, scientifically unproven remarks made by a chief adviser to Prime Minister Abbott simply make no sense – and are nonsensical.

Worse, such statements indicate a very serious deficiency in understanding how this planet's systems and its cycles operate. There is a lack of knowledge as to how ecosystems function and how all are interconnected to delivering the services, renewable and non-renewable resources alike, are essential to the health of this planet, to society and to sustainable economics.

Why is it that the Abbott Government with its dedicated neo-classical ideology on what it perceives as to how economic functions must fit to the prevailing economic dogma, rejects acknowledging not just the sciences, but ignores or denies (either from ignorance or political expediency) the implications of their anti-environment policies – effectively a state of politically-determined ecological illiteracy.

It is time to venture the question whether the present political bi-cameral system, conjoined with today's corporate privatisation control of the political processes, is a sane system with the necessary capacity to ensure survivability of all life, nationally and globally, into the future. Has the acceptance and encouragement of the ideological notion of competitiveness allowed goal-driven sociopaths and psychopaths to climb the ladders of power, prestige and unconscionable anti-social behaviour in the fields of corporate and political policies? Where personal profits and prestige come before people's rights? Shouldn't these questions be asked, and answered, now?

(b) *...attacks on federal environmental protection through handing approval powers over to state governments, which have poor track records and recent environmental staff cuts...*

Biosecurity is the most important strategy Australia can have to ensure that overseas diseases and pests don't enter Australia. Biosecurity is also vital to ensure that existing diseases and pests in Australia are managed, contained or eliminated. Biosecurity ensures that biodiversity within habitats, ecosystems and land systems is allowed to continue nature's life-cycles and evolution for future needs – for all life-forms survival as well as for humans.

The EPBC Act has, despite imperfections, achieved reasonably successful results, despite inadequate funding in ensuring that the Australia environment is able to maintain ecosystem functions. It has achieved this through tying in all States and Territories under its policy ambit of schedules, rules and regulations. The CSIRO State of the Environment Reports indicate that degradation processes, almost all caused from human failures to realise the repercussions of inappropriate development, ignorance of degradation issues and lack of ecological literacy, are continuing apace. Handing the EPBC Act criteria to the States will have disastrous repercussions as each State decides its own expedient policies. Communities that are battling weeds, inappropriate developments and infrastructure incursions through remnant vegetation, ensuring water savings, the revegetation of degraded habitats etc., have had a hard enough time trying to achieve co-operation with cross-border government agencies and having had in some circumstances to invoke the EPBC Act to achieve environmental protection measures, will further challenge gaining positive outcomes.

Government agency staff cutbacks, particularly in skilled personnel, already has been a policy feature of the major parties over the past decade. The impact has been little short of disastrous because of inappropriate – and lack of management, of Parks and Reserves (note the Victorian Attorney General's(VAGO) two scathing reports, 2012, 2013 on this issue).

The acceleration of existing weed intrusions, of new weed species (some of which are natives having moved out of their former habitat) and the battle to achieve needed funding to tackle these is most dis-

heartening. Additionally, some State Acts (e.g., Victoria's Flora & Fauna Conservation Guarantee Act) need revision, being considerably outdated in noxious status categories.

- (c) *...attacks on funding for community environment organisations and the Environmental Defender's Offices, abolition of the Biodiversity Fund, and cuts to programs including Landcare and Caring for our Country...*

One must assume that the government is intent on reducing the environment to a resource only useful for human constructs such as development and infrastructure - the growth paradigm - to enrich those already saddled in the power elite in this country. There appears to be no consideration or concern for conserving the biological factors, the existence of which underpin our human existence, neither is there any apparent concern for degrading features that pollute the environment. The government policies defunding environmental protections for the various representative bodies are shockingly devoid of any pretence of environmental protections – which by extrapolation means society's health and welfare. Reducing, removing funding appears to fall into the attitude of gung-ho to exploit and plunder the environment, and not merely a dissuasion for those people helping protect the environment what in reality should be the Government's responsibilities.

The reduction of funding of the sciences, such as CSIRO, is to be seen as an attempt to deny reality of scientific vigour in every field of scientific research. In effect, the sciences appear to be a political challenge to the present Government's attitude of veracity in their beliefs. Many researchers with invaluable knowledge and skills have lost positions. This is an accumulatively enormous loss to Australian entrepreneurship in research projects. It also indicates that the Government has little knowledgeable understanding of the value of scientific research.

The Kuznet's Curve, as adopted by many neo-classicist economists, has been proven time and again to be just a theory without any reality of proof. The attitude that the environment will recover once wealth has been achieved (whenever that elusive 'ever' is recognised to occur), in the assumption that funds will be forthcoming to help achieve recovery. There appears to be no understanding that once species, habitats and ecosystems are irreparably damaged, they cannot recover their former systems and biodiversity.

Profit, on the other hand, is a vice that no amount ever satisfies the pundits. As has been and continues to happen in the USA, corporations control many aspects of EPA and Agricultural government agencies, often ignoring degradation and pollution issues. Australia would appear to be heading down a similar trajectory as governments here regulate their agencies to tow the political lines. Objective reports from agency policies are now subject to political scrutiny and editing: hardly an enterprising endorsement to justify Australia as 'the clever country'.

- (d) *...Undermining Australia's compliance with the World Heritage Convention, the Convention on Biological Diversity, and the Ramsar Convention, in particular by attacking the Great Barrier Reef and the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Areas...*

Here is a repeat at the global level of an already Australian established policy of undermining, ignoring, denying values of the environment for present and future human generations, other than in terms of giving access to further developments, increased growth, increased population pressures resulting in diminishing and degrading resources – all in the name of an economic doctrinal zealotry that started in the Chicago School of Economics and launched by Britain's Margaret Thatcher. The Government policy spin is that our nation will benefit from exports of coal; that it would be silly to forego such huge profits, that Australia is only a low emitter of carbon emissions,

ignoring the coal we export will have no global emission increases. It indicates that the Government has no appreciation of the negative impacts their policies cause; either that or they simply don't believe or care of any implications through rising global temperatures.

There is no consideration that the Gross Domestic Product (or GNP) is a flawed construct, because the cost to the environment is never calculated being entered into the budget ledgers. Nor is the cost benefit ratio calculated likewise. Why a supposedly advanced civilisation such as Australia persists with such obviously flawed economic parameters can only be justified in context that the environment's resources are considered infinite. Human welfare must be the basic index, based on environmental health and availability resources, if any sensible and sustainable economic activity is to continue. Miguel Wackernagel's environmental footprint, based on human consumption of environmental resources on a per hectare basis, should be also considered in terms of defining the limits to growth.

(e) *...any other related matters...*

The use of political spin, flawed data and the use of biblical passages to endorse questionable economic policies has widespread implications, least of which is that in misleading the public on so serious issues such as climate change, renewable energy technology and exploitation of environmental resources without consideration for future generational needs, has to be regarded, and to be clearly seen, as a gigantic magnitude of irresponsible deception which needs urgent resolution. The protection of corporate elites' interests exploiting national environmental resources and assets at the expense of the majority human population and natural environment has to be abhorred and vigorously countered.

There is no gain for the natural and social environments under the present slash and burn anti-environmental policies. The primary question is: why would any government be willing to undermine the very resources that underpin the existence of all life on this finite planet? There has to be only one answer: greed, power, prestige and no conscience as to adverse consequences and a belief that there is no accountability or enforceability to be encountered for destructive actions taken at a political level.

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(a concerned citizen)