

To Senators on the Senate Select Committee on Climate Policy,

There are three reasons why Australia should set ambitious greenhouse gas emission reduction targets. 1. to give us credibility in international negotiations to advocate for the sort of global targets the science tells us is required to mitigate dangerous climate change, which will particularly affect Australia. 2. to recognise from a perspective of global equity, that as a large (the largest?) per capita emitter, we must make a commensurate effort; and 3. to restructure our economy to encourage development of sustainable energy systems, recognising this is the growth area of the future.

We must resist the pressure from the coal and mineral interests who have clearly lobbied relentlessly and have spooked the government into putting forward an emasculated model - the CPRS. This scheme will achieve none of the objectives above. Indeed it is predicated on the cynical assumption that such emission abatement credits as we require will be purchased from developing countries, allowing us to go on emitting as before.

It must be faced up to that cutting emissions means cutting the output of polluting industries - coal fired power and fossil fuel based transport. There is no way round this. You cannot make an omelette without breaking eggs.

The promise of 'clean coal' is an illusion. The idea of burying CO₂, so called CCS, does not stand up to detailed analysis. It has the following basic flaws: 1. The infrastructure to lock up 8 billion tonnes emitted globally from burning coal is prohibitively huge and costly. 2. No guarantee can be given that it will not escape. 3. it is ethically unacceptable to inflict the waste of this generation on future generations.

There are many approaches to mitigating emissions. Economic instruments are just one. The merits of trading system versus a tax are complex and I don't have a clear view either way. A tax seem less open to distortion. If a cap and trade system is chosen, it must recognise the benefits of voluntary actions and not allow these to do the job of the big polluters. The cap should be lowered by the amount of voluntary reductions achieved by individuals and businesses.

Other policy measures are vital:

1. Community education to ram home the necessity to conserve energy and avoid waste.
2. Massive investment in public transport and other non fuel intensive transport systems, including cycling, to tackle transport emissions.
3. Mandating recycling wherever possible.
4. Moving community attitudes away from excessive consumption, especially debt financed consumption.

Please act with courage. When the big business lobbyists have departed, ask yourselves who is lobbying on behalf of ordinary people and future generations. Thank you.

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