

To Senators on the Senate Select Committee on Climate Policy,

The '7.30 Report' and the 'Four Corners' programs of 9 March 2009 refer.

There was much verbosity and little substance on the subject of greenhouse gas emission targets. As an example of this, when Professor Garnaut referred to other countries' lamenting that Australia set its sights very low, making it harder for them and others to set their sights high. Minister Penny Wong's comment was: " Well, we've got to take a perspective that's from now to mid-century. When we set those targets we were very aware we had to get the balance right, we had to support the jobs of today, whilst creating and supporting the new industries of tomorrow. Because what is required to reduce Australia's emissions by the sorts of reductions we are going to have to achieve by mid-century, is an economic transformation. It is changing the way our economy works".

The complexity of striking 'the right balance' is no doubt immense but only when this is approached from a status quo position of wanting one's cake and eating it.

We are however dealing here with a planetary problem where no less than the viability of life on this planet is at stake. No policy motivated by calculated political advantage is acceptable in this context.

We have yet to hear the minister for Climate Change or Prime Minister Kevin Rudd allude to the crux of the matter, namely that 'Australia is the largest PER CAPITA emitter of CO<sub>2</sub>-equivalents in the whole wide world', and leads the field of polluters in the good company of the United States, Canada and New Zealand. To say it loud and clear would imply responsibilities first and foremost as a member of the human species and then, also as a courageous government if aptly led by clear ethical principles rather than by electoral and economic convenience. Climate change focus is immensely more important than the outcome of the next Federal election.

A hard look at the reality of numbers shows that the proposed target of 5% to 15% reduction in Australia's greenhouse gas emissions would still result in a burden somewhere between 25.5 to 23.0 tons of CO<sub>2</sub>-equivalent per capita, keeping in mind that the EU, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, South Korea, the Philippines, to name a few, range in a bracket that extends from 3 to 12 tons CO<sub>2</sub>-equivalent per person, and that the world's average emission per capita is around 4.4 tons CO<sub>2</sub>-equivalent per person against our 6 times greater 27 tons CO<sub>2</sub>-equivalent per person! There go the notions of social justice and equal opportunity and human dignity when projected at the level of the planet's priority best interest, namely, its survival.

In such light, the claim that Australia may not target much more effective reductions if the world does not follow suit, represents a notable affront to a very large proportion of the international community. To say, as Mitch Hooke of the Minerals Council of Australia does, that Australia's emissions are only 1.4% of the world's total is misleading unless he adds that Australia's population represents 0.3% of the world's population but is responsible for 1.4% of its greenhouse gas pollution. Imagine the scenario should every country on earth align its emissions at Australia's comparative level. And why should they not? The resulting emission, namely 178 billion tons of CO<sub>2</sub>-equivalent per year, instead of the current 29 billions, would most likely mark the end of any life on earth!

So the ball remains in the court of those privileged industrial powers that, for a number of obvious reasons, should have no other choice but to lead by example. This should be so because these powers built their inordinate riches and prosperity on the back of fossil fuels when the poorer nations were not in a position to do the same. Who or what is going to clarify the global ethical responsibilities? Is it not time for every nation to think of the global interest ahead of the national interest? In this regard it is of no consolation that the Opposition policy might even be more deleterious than the window-dressing proposed by the Rudd Government.

A thought by Vaclav Smil, an energy expert at the University of Manitoba may be worth pondering over: "We have the know-how to consume, in rich countries, only half as much energy as we do without lowering our REAL quality of life and to provide everybody, even in the most desperate parts of Africa with enough for a decent life. But we prefer to waste enormously, and Africans prefer endless bouts of civil wars. This is not primarily a technical problem.... This is primarily an ethical, moral problem (we have only one biosphere)." Guido Cifali,