

The Secretary
Senate Select Committee on Climate Policy
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA
ACT 2600

Thursday, 2 April 2009

Dear Senators,

Re: The Government's Climate Change Policy and the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme

Thank you for inviting submissions to the Senate Select Committee on Climate Policy.

I worry so much about our future and am writing to please ask for your help. You have the chance to really make a difference, by listening to Australia's top climate scientists and taking a step in helping solve the climate crisis.

I am writing with the **great** concerns I have about climate change and for the future of our planet. I don't claim to be an expert or a scientist, I am just a teacher, and a person who worries about our future on a daily basis. You don't need to be a scientist to know that there is something very wrong about the way that we use our planet and to see the devastating effects we are already experiencing because of this. If we don't take action now, not only are we putting ourselves in danger, we are cheating future generations.

When I read the statistics and predictions for our future, it truly scares me! Climate change and global warming is the **biggest threat** that faces people today. This is something we need to take action on NOW, before it is too late (which I sometimes fear it already is).

Some people think climate change doesn't affect them – I know, as some people have said to me "I don't 'give a stuff' about the environment". This is not just an 'environmental' issue. It is something that affects us **all!** We will all suffer from the effects of climate change. Maybe they believe they won't be affected by this in their lifetime, but what about the generations in front of us. I don't have children, but I hope to soon, and cannot understand how people, especially those with children can ignore this issue that threatens us. Each year that we take no action locks in a more devastating future for Australia and the world.

We are beginning to see the affects of climate change already in Australia. This summer we experienced the worst bushfires ever in Victoria. Each summer we are experiencing longer and more intense heatwaves than ever before. This drought we are having in Victoria (is it easier to call it a drought than face up to the fact that this could be the way we must exist now, with permanent water restrictions, waterless gardens filled

with stones, pebbles, and concrete, etc?) is one of the longest and most destructive. As a teacher I feel for the children, most of whom have never known what it is like to have plenty of water, green grass and gardens and to experience what it is like to not have restrictions on water usage. Conditions are only going to get worse!

Australia's best climate scientists have warned us saying that if action is not taken to make huge cuts in greenhouse gas emissions soon, then we will see more of these extremes of weather – extreme bushfire days¹, heatwave stress, more severe droughts, and more cyclones.

When the Labor Party were voted in at the last election I felt a sense of relief and excitement. I was relieved to know that finally we had someone in power who shared my concerns about the future of our planet and also excitement at the changes and initiatives that the ALP had committed to during their election campaign. One of these initiatives was the **Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme**. But now I am feeling ripped off. We were led to believe that the government were **serious** about reducing greenhouse gas emissions, but we now know that these promises were not what they seemed.

I thought that the new *Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme* was a step in the right direction, but after reading the details of the scheme, it seems more like a token effort. The government's plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to between 5% and 15% below 2000 levels by 2020 is inadequate. The legislation's aim should be changed to 25% to 50% per cent, as advised by IPCC scientists. We need to set a strong climate change policy before the crucial Copenhagen climate change conference in December. Australia needs to lead by example.

There is also another design flaw in the *CPRS*, in that the extra bits we do as individuals, like purchasing Green Power or Australian carbon offsets, will not actually reduce Australia's carbon emissions. From what I have read, I now understand that under the legislation it will make it cheaper for high emission industries to keep on polluting. Because of this flaw, the consumers' voluntary actions don't count above and beyond what big business would be required to do anyway. So when my husband and I pay more for our Green energy in order to pollute less, the big industries then pay less to pollute more. I want to know that the little extra things that I do to cut greenhouse emissions are making a difference!

I know we have many issues facing us at the moment, in particular the Global Financial Crisis. But I can't see any point worrying about our economic future if we keep 'using' our planet, and not taking care of it. Getting serious about combating climate change can actually help our economic future too, as I have read that strong action on climate change will create a whole industry of "green collar" jobs and investment into renewable energy².

The issue of climate change and the greenhouse gases is something I have heard about my whole life. When I was a kid I remember hearing about 'the hole in the ozone layer' and the 'greenhouse effect'. It astounds me that in 20 years very little has been done. Small changes have occurred, but in order to combat the climate crisis these changes need to be more dramatic. We can't keep saying that we are "planning", "researching", "developing", etc. We don't have the time! We need to act NOW!

¹ A joint CSIRO/Bureau of Meteorology study of the impact of climate change in bushfires found parts of Victoria faced up to 65% more days of extreme fire risk by 2020 and 230% more by mid-century.

² According to CSIRO economic modelling 2.7 million new jobs will be created in Australia by 2025 if we set course to become carbon neutral by 2050.

As you hear from experts from around the country I urge you to listen to Australia's best climate scientists and think of the future we are leaving for our kids. I urge you to use your important role to recommend Australia makes a response to the climate crisis that future generations will thank us for. I appreciate your time in reading this.

Yours sincerely,

Siarn James