

To Senators on the Senate Select Committee on Climate Policy,

I make my submission as an informed and concerned citizen who is dismayed at the Government's proposed CPRS scheme, which is one of the subjects of this Enquiry.

The two major flaws are that it has an unacceptably low emissions target and it over-compensates the major polluters. This scheme protects polluters for years into the future by handing out free pollution permits. It protects the profits of Australia's worst climate offenders instead of encouraging clean competition. This protection of big polluters also unfairly transfers the cost of meeting the target to industries with less lobbying power and to the community at large.

By setting such a weak target, and ensuring that Australia's emissions cannot fall below that level, the scheme will act as a disincentive for householders, businesses, councils and State Governments to reduce emissions. Their efforts will be helpful only in reducing the price pressure on polluters. Setting a weak target is likely to see the wrong investment decisions made, where public and private money is spent on "lower pollution" infrastructure instead of zero emissions infrastructure.

This government promised to take effective action on climate change yet proposes a much weaker version of the Garnaut Report plan which itself was problematic in setting the target bar too low. We must make every effort to avoid the "tipping points" highlighted in the scientific research and in the UN Climate Report. That means high-polluting countries like Australia must move towards carbon neutrality as fast as possible, with cuts of at least 30% by 2020. The recent proposed cuts announced by the US Congress put Australia's efforts to shame.

Emissions trading is important. By setting a target and sending a price signal, it should provide a strong framework for all our other policies, such as renewable energy feed-in tariffs and home energy efficiency retrofits, to grow on and flourish. However, a badly designed emissions trading scheme will constrict the growth of the zero emissions economy and actively prevent the transformation we need. It would be better to let the other policies do their job unassisted than hold them back with a bad emissions trading scheme.

By locking in a weak target and refusing to accept cuts of more than 15% by 2020, we could undermine global efforts to reach agreement on ambitious targets at the Copenhagen climate conference at the end of the year.

We cannot afford to take the soft options with our planet and our children's and grandchildren's futures at stake. This issue requires strong leadership and long-term vision by the government.

Thank you

David Westmore