

To Senators on the Senate Select Committee on Climate Policy,

The Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme proposed by the Government sets an unacceptably weak target, and over-compensates polluters at the expense of the community and environment. Setting a stronger target should dramatically reduce Australia's emissions and ensure Australia does its fair share to tackle climate change.

Reducing Australia's carbon emissions to 5% below 2000 levels by 2020 is a recipe for climate disaster. Countries like Australia need to reduce their emissions by between 25 and 40 per cent by 2020 if we are to avoid runaway climate change. The target range of 5-15% is unacceptably low and must be urgently reviewed if the Rudd government is serious about tackling the problem.

I would like to see the introduction of a polluter-pays scheme, rather than a scheme which provides polluters with permits to pollute. Why should they be able to do this at the expense of clean industries?

Transferring the cost of reducing emissions to industries with less lobbying power is surely a demonstration of a government vying for political advantage. In addition every dollar of compensation that goes to polluters is a dollar less to assist householders and clean industries.

The CPRS also fails to take into account voluntary emission reductions from the community. The efforts of everyone from householders to State Governments to reduce emissions will be helpful only in reducing the price pressure on polluters. This must be fixed by taking account of community action and all the policies already in place when setting the scheme caps, and using the scheme to drive more ambitious efforts.

I would also urge the government to consider mandatory renewable energy targets, a renewable energy feed-in tariff, energy efficiency standards for homes and commercial buildings, fuel efficiency standards and investment in trains, buses and trams rather than freeways. Ending the logging of Australia's native forests would reduce Australia's emissions by substantially more than 5%. All these policies should be pursued regardless of the CPRS.

People often think that any action to reduce emissions, even by as little as 5%, will reduce the risk of climate change. In fact we know that there are tipping points in Earth's systems which, if breached, will send our climate spinning out of control with catastrophic consequences for all of us.

If we are to have a reasonable chance of preventing runaway climate change, high-polluting countries like Australia must move towards carbon neutrality as fast as possible.

The government must listen to expert advice and the people of Australia who voted them in when considering the CPRS.

Climate Change Minister Penny Wong has described the CPRS as 'better than nothing'. Surely a clever country like Australia can do "better than nothing"?

The electorate doesn't want a plan that protects polluters and encourages runaway and irreversible climate change. We have the technological know how but we just need the political will.

Yours faithfully

Rosie Young