

The Secretary - Senate Select Committee on Climate Policy
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Parliament House
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SUBMISSION TO SELECT COMMITTEE ON CLIMATE POLICY – 8 April 2009

FROM: Geoff Holman - Private Citizen

I have a number of very serious concerns with the way Climate Change matters are being dealt with by Government.

In particular current Policy proposals:

- 1. Do not look at the very simplest and most effective way of mitigating Greenhouse gas emissions**
- 2. Are profoundly undemocratic**
- 3. Lock this nation into an arrangement which will eventuate in the very worst consequences for future generations**

I have outlined my concerns below:

- 1 Terms of reference of the Garnaut Report were not observed or conformed to.**

The Terms of reference of the Garnaut Report included the Phrase:

In making these recommendations, **the Review will consider policies that: mitigate climate change, reduce the costs of adjustment to climate change** (including through the acceleration of technological change in supply and use of energy), and reduce any adverse effects of climate change and mitigating policy responses on Australian incomes.

Yet the Report did not examine the major factor which addressed this criteria, namely very high rates of population growth. This has a greater bearing on this matter than any other factor and yet was totally ignored.

These rates are not “givens” or accidental or unavoidable; they are a result of deliberate Government actions to increase birth rates and to achieve high rates of immigration.

The Garnaut Report repeats this high growth scenario with examination; it uses population growth models found in the IGR report of 2007 (ref: http://www.treasury.gov.au/documents/1239/PDF/IGR_2007_final_report.pdf) which was produced by Treasury officials as a fiscal report. This high growth was not official policy.

The IGR report in turn was based on a Bureau of Statistics Report (ref: <http://www.abs.gov.au/Ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/3222.0>) which included the disclaimer:

The projections are not predictions or forecasts, but are **simply illustrations** of the growth and change in population which would occur if certain assumptions about future levels of fertility, mortality, internal migration and overseas migration were to prevail over the projection period.

So the high population projections of the Garnaut Report are actually based on an example, which was prepared by the ABS for “illustrative” reasons. This does not seem to me to be any sort of basis for developing policies which to a large degree will shape the future of this nation.

This is not my only concern in this area.

A further serious deficiency of the Garnaut Report was that it did not consider the mitigation of carbon emissions under alternative population lower growth scenarios, including a stable population. Common sense suggests that this would make it easier to meet and improve emission targets.

From the Government fact sheet:

(ref: <http://www.climatechange.gov.au/whitepaper/factsheets/pubs/031-australias-national-emissions-targets.pdf>) for Dec 2008 ,

we learn from this that **Australia’s population is projected to grow by 45 per cent** over the period to 2020. i.e by nearly 10 million people.

It seems that this high population growth is the fundamental reason why, as a nation, we are now aiming for only a 5% reduction in emissions by 2020. It is simply common sense that if population increases by 45% then it will be vastly more difficult to reduce total emissions. I believe that the Committee should consider alternative projections based on different population scenarios, including zero population growth.

Unless this is done then the whole policy is built on artificial assumptions. The results must be made public, then we citizens are being denied information which is vital to a proper consideration of our future and the future of future generations.

2. The proposals are profoundly undemocratic

Following on from the above, I would remind Senators that there is no official Public population policy, and one must ask where does this number, of 45 % and 10 million people (referred to above), come from? What is its basis? Is it just an illustration? If so why are we using this as the basis for such an important policy?

It appears that the Government is introducing a population policy, via these measures, without public discussion and without proper process. Is it a “back door” population policy designed to suit lobbyists and financial backers. This is profoundly undemocratic. It seems that once the Climate Policy is accepted, then the Nation will be saddled with high population growth, whether it is wanted or not, as a fundamental part of the Climate policy.

With regards to the Carbon Trading Scheme, CTS, this is also based on these same assumptions, and so it too is unsound and undemocratic.

Another concern with the CTS is that it is difficult to understand and has all the characteristics of a pea and thimble trick.

How can we increase our population by 45% and yet by the magic of a CTS, which includes free permits, reduce emissions by 5%? It sounds too good to be true. It does not

seem to be explained, but it should be.

If this reduction is only to be achieved by using foreign carbon sinks, then I believe that this ought to be made clear to the Public, and perhaps Senators can address this. I believe that we deserve to know exactly what measures and economies are expected of us, as opposed to those that we will buy in from other nations. Perhaps the morality of exploiting poor nations so that we may avoid lifestyle changes, should also be addressed by Senators.

Even the “experts” including the Minister, differ on what the CTS really means and entails, as evidenced by recent radio and TV discussion on whether home owners who strive for “carbon savings” only serve to enrich the holders of permits.

It seems that this confusion could be avoided by using a carbon tax, perhaps in tandem with Carbon trading. People do understand a Tax and can respond to it individually. The CTS seems remote from the ordinary affairs of people and I do not think people will respond to it in the same way as they would a tax.

I would ask Senators to ensure that any measure is understandable and clearly explained; if it is not, then can it be truly democratic?

3. The proposals lock this nation into an arrangement which will eventuate in the very worst consequences for future generations.

What you must all bear in mind at all times is that **carbon emissions and populations are forever**. Meaning that once created or developed they can NEVER practically be reversed or eliminated.

This is why both these matters must be dealt with a “no regrets” approach. I believe that the policy as it currently stands does not meet this “no regrets” criteria. It does not take a precautionary approach of least harm.

In this regard some of my observations are that the the Garnaut report:

- a) Did not consider alternative population growth models, as I have indicated in the above.
- b) Seems to depend on Carbon Capture and Storage, CCS, to mitigate future emissions deriving from high future energy use and growth. When this technology has not yet been developed.
- c) Did not address future energy constraints, in particular oil, in the modeling. Many experts are predicting severe shortages of oil in a matter of 4 or 5 years time, at current consumption. This clearly ought to be addressed by the modelling, since it will have a profound bearing on society, productivity, population capacity and emissions.
- d) Seemed to implicitly accept that future growth is a given and that this can sustain the sort of scenarios and economics outcomes. This is a false assumption. Growth will be limited by all sorts of constraints, (resources, environmental, climatic etc). and any plan

must take this into account.

e) Does not appear to take account of the huge economic and “carbon” costs of developing the infrastructure and jobs for an extra 10 million people before 2020 and a further 30 or so million by the end of the century. I calculate that infrastructure costs alone required for the 10 million extra people would be at least \$1 trillion and possibly \$2 trillion dollars. Has anyone calculated the cost of this? If not then how do we know that we afford the Policy?

“Carbon” costs and energy inputs for this extra infrastructure would be mind boggling; think of all our existing infrastructure, roads, bridges, dams, schools, hospitals etc, and then imagine building half as much again in 20 years. Can we afford to do this? Did the Garnaut report really look at this? Can Senators establish the facts?

f) The Garnaut report, because it uses per capita numbers throughout for modelling and projections, does not clearly state what total population numbers are being used in the various projections and calculations. This gives the impression that actual population numbers are being hidden from public consideration; this obfuscation needs to be rectified so that citizens can understand the scenarios being used. I suggest the Committee insist that actual population numbers should be presented along with per capita numbers in a set of revised fact sheets for the Public; once again I stress the proposals cannot really be democratic if they are not readily understood.

All of these matters need to be fully considered by you before you approve any of the policy legislation.

4 Conclusion

I trust Senators will give my concerns the same level of consideration, as our political representatives in the lower house, and their Public officials, have given to the entreaties of Lobbyists for the development Industry and Big Business, who it seems to me have a powerful and disproportionate hold on the affairs of this Nation.

I am concerned that powerful interest groups, in pursuit of their own narrow interests, are leading Government by the nose into an irretrievable and unsustainable disaster.

Senators, I have great fear for the safe future of my grandson and of all future generations; for his sake and for the sake of all future generations, please make future generations the major focus of your Policy deliberations.