

Mums Kids & Climate
Robyn Waite & Rachelle Sandow (Coordinators)

The Secretary
Senate Select Committee on Climate Policy
PO Box 6100
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Canberra ACT 2600
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6th April 2009

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Mums Kids & Climate submission to the Australian Senate Select Committee on Climate Policy.

Mums Kids & Climate is an Adelaide-based network of climate-concerned mums, actively working to ensure a safe climate future for their children. *Mums, Kids & Climate* agrees with Prime Minister Rudd's 2007 statement that Climate Change is "one of the greatest moral and economic challenges of our time". We consider that all action to address Climate Change should reflect the moral imperative of ensuring the rights of our children and future generations to a liveable planet.

We believe the fundamental policy requirement is that there is a mechanism to drive changes in corporate and individual behaviour to significantly reduce our carbon footprint as a nation and ultimately achieve a zero carbon economy. The level of carbon reduction must be based on what the scientific community is overwhelmingly telling us is necessary to ensure a safe climate. Furthermore, whatever mechanism is used to constrain our carbon emissions, it must be flexible enough to deal with changing scientific evidence and capable of producing an expedited response to avoid catastrophic climate change.

We do not think that the proposed Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS) meets these demands.

Emissions Trading Scheme

In relation to the proposed establishment of an Emission Trading Scheme (ETS), we believe it is not an effective mechanism for keeping fossil fuels in the ground and attaining a zero carbon economy. ETS schemes, as evidenced by the European Union model, are open to manipulation and fraud and have so far done little to reduce carbon emissions. The mechanisms for reducing carbon pollution must be simple, direct and infallible because failure is not an option.

Legislating to phase out coal and other fossil fuel industries is the simplest way to ensure that fossil fuels stay in the ground, thus reducing Australia's carbon emissions and contributing positively to global solutions for climate change. Such legislation must be complemented by massive investment in research and infrastructure for renewable energy sources, free and frequent public transport, and electric cars charged from renewable sources. A phase out of fossil fuel industries must also provide a just transition for affected workers and communities.

Until the phase out takes place, a carbon tax with 100% dividend as advocated by leading climatologist Professor James Hansen would be an effective and equitable market-based means of reducing carbon emissions.

Targets

We consider that Australia must attain zero net carbon as soon as possible, with reductions of at least 60% below 1990 levels by 2020 in line with scientific findings publicised in Copenhagen in March 2009.

If all nations around the world adopted the shamefully weak 5% 2020 carbon reduction target proposed by the CPRS, carbon levels in the atmosphere would reach past 550 parts per million and trigger unstoppable feedback loops resulting in catastrophic climate change. As mothers, we consider this scenario to be horrific and clearly unacceptable for our children and grandchildren. They have the right to enjoy the world as we have known it.

As mothers, we also feel a sense of solidarity with the millions of mothers and children, mostly from developing countries, who will become displaced climate refugees by the middle of this century. We are adamant that Australia, as the world's highest per capita greenhouse gas emitter, must lead the way in solving this crisis by setting reduction targets that are in line with current scientific evidence.

In addition, weak targets will undermine efforts to form a crucial international agreement at the UN Conference on Climate Change in Copenhagen in December. If we are to make any inroads in stopping catastrophic climate change, we need to show the world that Australia is serious about addressing climate change and that we are willing to pull our weight and commit to deep cuts in our greenhouse gas emissions.

Compensation of Polluters

The CPRS over-compensates polluters at the expense of the community and the environment. We want you to consider our children's interests above the interests of large polluting businesses and entities.

By providing Australia's worst polluters with billions of dollars of compensation in cash and free permits, the CPRS protects the profits of the large polluters at the expense of clean industries and our children. It also transfers the cost of reducing emissions to the community, including families. The compensation of polluters acts against the corporate behavioural changes we should be aiming for.

Voluntary Reductions

We are also concerned that the CPRS fails to take into account voluntary emission reductions from the community. The efforts of individuals, families and communities to reduce their own emissions through taking individual action (e.g. installing solar PV panels) will not affect the cap on the carbon target. It will merely free up permits to be sold to polluting industries. This will serve as a strong disincentive to individual or community action on climate change.

We consider any scheme should take into account individual behaviour to reduce carbon emissions and these reductions should be used to drive more ambitious targets.

Additional Measures

Climate Change is an emergency facing us here and now. Accordingly, all tools currently at our disposal must now be used to reduce our carbon emissions. These include (but are not limited to):

- A high mandatory renewable energy target;
- energy efficiency standards for all buildings;
- massive increase in investment in public transport;
- ending logging of Australia's old growth forests which act as carbon sinks;
- fuel efficiency standards for all vehicles;
- national gross feed-in tariff scheme for renewable energy sources; and
- promotion of local food production (e.g. home vegetable gardens, community gardens).

We implore you Senators to think of your children and future generations when considering the issues raised at this enquiry and in making your recommendations. We ask that your decisions be made in the best interests of our children and maintaining a habitable planet. We ask that you be guided by the recent scientific findings as presented most recently in Copenhagen earlier this year. We ask that you be bold and decisive in determining solutions that offer the greatest chance of success. Your children and grandchildren would expect no less.

Yours sincerely

Robyn Waite and Rachelle Sandow
Coordinators
Mums Kids & Climate