

[Type text]

To all Senators on the Senate Select Committee reviewing Climate Policy,

First of all congratulations to the Greens Senators for initiating this Senate Inquiry. As soon as the details of the Rudd Government's Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS) were released it was obvious that this was a policy written for and on behalf of the fossil fuel industry which would not address climate change with the commitment and urgency that is required.

I personally believe that a carbon tax is a preferable way to tackle the problems of greenhouse gas emissions. Failing that though, an emissions trading scheme is another important tool, if and only if it is well designed. A well-designed trading scheme would introduce strong targets, send a definitive price signal to the market, and would help reduce Australia's already high emissions while minimizing any costs to the economy. Australia has an obligation to the rest of the world to do its fair share in tackling climate change.

As it stands, the CPRS proposed by the Government will prevent the economic transformation required to offset the financial impacts of climate change that will certainly be felt. It will also exacerbate the environmental conditions that so urgently need addressing.

The main problems I see with the ETS is first, that the targets set for emissions reductions (5-15%) are unconscionably low and undermine other international targets. Second, any initiatives taken by individuals, local councils and state governments will be completely offset by free permits to the worst environmental offenders.

The emissions reduction targets, i.e. 5-15% below 2000 levels by 2020 are so low that they spell disaster for our environment. Further these targets will not allow the Rudd Government to meet its own goal of stabilizing greenhouse gas concentrations of 450 parts per million. Australia needs to set emissions reductions by between 25 and 50 per cent by 2020 (on 1990 levels) to avoid runaway climate change. The proposed target range of 5-15% is not adequate nor appropriate and should be substantially increased.

Greenhouse gas polluters should not be rewarded for worsening climate change. They have known for many years that their industries were putting our environment at risk. That they, alongside governments avoided making the required investments in a timely and cost-saving manner is not the fault of the Australian community, yet we continually have to pay for inefficiencies, bad work practices and 19th century mind sets and technologies. How is it that we are still producing electricity and driving cars with the same or similar technologies that existed early last century? Moreover, Australia's worst polluters have already been subsidised with untold tax payer funds for many, many years. Now we are

[Type text]

to pay MORE for them to continue with virtually business as usual, and all at the expense of clean industries, 'working families', individuals, and small businesses.

Adding insult to the fact that initiatives taken by individuals, local councils and state governments will be completely offset by free permits to the worst environmental offenders, is the injury that any further efforts that individuals, local councils and state governments make to reduce their emissions will only serve to reduce the price pressure on polluters. The government must account for all individual and community action and all existing policies when setting the scheme caps, and use the scheme to deliberately drive further efforts to reduce emissions.

The importance of other measures to reduce Australia's emissions cannot be overstated. For example, a mandatory renewable energy target, a renewable energy feed-in tariff, energy efficiency standards for homes and commercial buildings, fuel efficiency standards and investment in trains, buses and trams should all be utilised along with the ETS. One obvious and immediate action would be to end logging of Australia's native forests. This alone would reduce Australia's emissions by substantially more than 5%.

Strong action on climate change will also create new jobs in clean renewable energies and other associated industries rather than destroy jobs as the big polluters claim. The CPRS as it stands will not only consign these potential jobs to the dust bin, it will put those jobs already created in current and profitable sustainable businesses at risk.

The Rudd Government was elected with a loud and clear mandate to act strongly on climate change. My local MP Jenny Macklin was elected with strong Greens support as were many other current Labor MPs. It is clear the Australian community wants a stronger and fairer ETS that will adequately and decisively reduce Australia's emissions as they were promised. Since the federal election more and more data is showing that climate changes are happening much faster than first predicted. I urge the Senate Committee to set aside their politics and act on the science. Please recommend much stronger targets to address runaway climate change, and a much fairer scheme that will reduce the financial burden on tax payers and promote rather than penalise clean sustainable industries.

Yours sincerely

Lisa Hodgson

8th April 2009