

## **Senate Select Committee on Climate Policy**

### **Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme Legislation**

Dear Senate Inquiry –

Please accept the following as my personal submission re the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS) Legislation. I would be happy to provide further details of my thinking, or to answer questions if required.

In my opinion, an emissions reduction target of 5-15% isn't even halfway real – it's a joke. And, time and again, public opinion polls indicate that 70% of my fellow Australians agree.

So what if climate-change-denying George W Bush was still president of the USA when the Australian Government came out with this token gesture – things have changed dramatically with Obama, and we've now got a chance to revise upwards for something close to what's really needed. Climate change isn't about what's neat or nice – it's global panic-button. As I write this, great walls of Antarctic ice are crumbling into the ocean, with dire cumulative effects. World scientists have long since stopped arguing over sea levels rises – now the only debate is how high they will be, with 6 metres predicted by 3010. Even 1 metre by 2030 is dire, and the way things are accelerating that's probably an under-estimate. Some of the weather changes predicted for decades later are here now. Ask Al Gore.

I call on the Australian Government to recognize the urgency of this, and to upgrade all targets for emission reductions to at least 40–50% by 2020.

I also believe that the current CPRS legislation is fatally flawed in the way it proposes pricing for carbon emissions, with big emitters being able to “buy” permits that allow them to continue basically business-as-usual, while personal initiatives at a family or local level will count for nothing – or worse, help “subsidise” a dirty status quo. Note that I also object vehemently to any plan that would see Australia as a nation “buy” pollution rights from Pacific neighbours. Using Nauru as an outsource location to evade our United Nations/humanitarian responsibilities for detainees was shameful enough – co-opting smaller nations as accessories in climate change evasion would be even worse, with a pollution penalty paid by the whole planet..

I also have fundamental objection to the way the current proposal turns climate change into yet another excuse for market manipulations, such that all profits go to the moneymen and big end of town. In the 90's and despite warnings from ordinary Australians like me, it happened in regard to water trading – and look where that's led to. Water rights have been abused, the Murray Darling is worse than it ever would have been, and the Coorong is dying. Market forces do NOT favour environmental factors and that includes climate change. One look at the financial fiasco our world's in right now is a good indication that market forces aren't all they've been spruiked for, even for finance

More to the point for CPRS, the carbon trading schemes introduced in Europe a decade ago now show what a muddied mess markets make of it all. They also demonstrate the dangers of setting prices and targets too low. Because of this, and because it's a GLOBAL problem, it is even more important to harmonise Australia's plan with the rest of the world – and this

means no emissions targets or CPRS legislation until AFTER the Copenhagen climate deal has been finalized. As a nation, we've dithered so long getting to this point, that a few more months delay will be worth it to ensure a best-possible outcome. This includes making sure that individual, community, and all government emissions reduction efforts contribute to additional emissions abatement. Such actions should lower emissions, not lower carbon prices. California is a prime example of what can be achieved by concentrating on SAVING emissions before they happen – with lots-of-little community-focused activities. The result in less than 10 years adds up to 20% less pollution already – without having to wait until “everyone” or “other States” are in on it, and with NONE of the \$\$ complications in a CPRS.

About COAL - I am seriously concerned about all matters regarding this. I do not believe that our future well-being as a nation should be held to ransom by any industry, no matter how long it's been around, or what the export earnings are. The silver at BHP ran out, and we no longer ride on the sheep's back. Asbestos used to be a good profit-maker too.

I am also aware talk about “Clean Coal” is rapidly being revealed as a fairytale told by spin doctors. The technology does not exist in any workable form, and around the world, all but one of the pilot geo-sequestration sites being set up (including a much ballyhooed pseudo-installation in USA which stayed alive as long as it could get mega-earmarks from the Bush brigade) have now been discontinued as non-viable either for practical or financial reasons. One small plant that persists is unlikely to be operating before 2024 – if ever. With the Great Barrier Reef already bleaching, Australia cannot afford to wait 15 years on the off-chance.

Considering all this, I say – let's legislate a ban on all new coal-fired power stations in Australia and a moratorium on all new coal exploration and mining. Let's also plan to phase out existing coal-fired power plants over the next ten years. The requirements for assistance to coal-fired generators under the CPRS is counter-productive – at the very least it must be conditional upon the 10-year phase-out plan, with time-based (if necessary tax-based) punitive incentives to get out sooner rather than later. Consistent with this, I believe the Government should suspend all subsidies, tax incentives and financial support to the fossil fuel industry. While some transition support may be needed to the PEOPLE involved, the inclusion of corporate compensation measures (as proposed) is an insult to commonsense.

Much better, direct all money raised through the CPRS into lower emissions technologies including renewable energy. Especially, let's redirect the \$500 million (so-called) Clean Coal Fund into promoting and advancing renewable energy technology, growth and infrastructure – this would be an investment in the future, not a pay-off that rewards a polluting past. It's also something that has LONG-TERM export potential. In the early 1990's one of my friends was a photo-voltaic engineer and told me how his work could help make Australia a world-leader in emerging technology. Instead of being encouraged, he forced out by Govt-induced redundancies and ended up having to find a job in Germany. Guess what country's now making billions with this industry. Let's not miss out a second time.

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Finally, and for two reasons, a CPRS Act must include third party rights. Firstly because its impact and outcomes will affect everyone in a much wider community than just the immediate emitters, and secondly, to ensure that all aspects of CPRS remain transparent and accountable. Note also that, given the speed with which climate change evolving (and

climate change science revealing further dangers) I also urge the inclusion of built-in “sunset” clauses that require statutory review and updating of the Act at least once in every term of Parliament.

Trusting these comments are useful to the Senate Select Committee on Climate Policy -

**Emma Brooks Maher**