

25 April 2009

Submission to Senate Select Committee on Climate Policy

The report commissioned by the Australian Government and handed down by Professor Garnaut is arguably the most important document relating to Australia's future health ever prepared. The recommendations of the Garnaut Climate Change Review remain almost totally unchallenged by any respected members of the scientific community. That in itself should be regarded as overwhelming support for the science.

Even so the world has moved on even since the Garnaut report was presented. Respected climate change scientists are now providing indisputable evidence that the process of global warming is accelerating even more rapidly than Garnaut envisaged and that positive feedback systems are already beginning to operate throughout the world, for example the melting of permafrost which will lead to large quantities of methane being released into the atmosphere that will accelerate warming even faster.

It is important not to get trapped in the idea that the world may warm by 2 degrees. We must understand that this is an Average temperature increase over the globe. Scientists' concerns become much more understandable when we realise that particular areas will warm faster than others eg. Think of the devastation that will be caused by a 7 degree warming of Antarctica.

How relevant is this to Australia. It is enormously relevant. It will mean widespread disasters through increased frequency and intensity of bushfires, More severe and protracted droughts and increases in insect born diseases such as malaria etc not to mention destruction of Australian Tourist icons such as the Great Barrier Reef.

As such, in Australia we have a definite vested interest in getting our climate change legislation right, and right first time. Indeed as the world's champion polluters by head of population we should be leading by example.

When considering the Governments Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme it is important to keep the above points in the forefront of our minds. In doing so, my view is that a reduction target of 5-15% by 2020 is just not in the ballpark. It is effectively thumbing our collective noses at the science, understandable for a climate change sceptic but completely unacceptable for a government that really understands the issues.

By my understanding the formula is every 10% reduction by 2020 requires an additional 55 million tonnes of abatement. The federal governments "Tracking to Kyoto 2007" document estimates the 20% renewable energy target will cut 20 million tonnes of carbon by 2020. This along with the 50 million tonne reduction likely to flow from the \$3.7 billion insulation package the government is

championing, means that we should relatively easily achieve the target of 15%. With a concerted effort by government, private industry and individuals on such things as public transport, motor vehicle improvements, reforestation etc,etc, we should comfortably stretch these targets to the minimum of 25% by 2020 on 2000 levels recommended by Garnaut.

However, an examination of the governments CPRS suggests that there is too much emphasis placed on protecting the big polluters and too little emphasis on supporting and encouraging renewable energy. The polluters must pay and if that means an increase in energy costs initially then so be it. I recognise that this will disadvantage some individuals, families and corporations. Transitional support will be needed. But please, let us support those in need, not those in greed.

The greater the emphasis on strong action the more new Green collar jobs will be created. The current global financial crisis should be telling us that jobs will be lost from the conventional industries, especially heavy polluters, no matter how much we support these industries. The most sensible thing to do would be to concentrate expenditure in the areas that are most likely to assist Australia's future.

I am terribly concerned that the weak targets, if adopted now, will lock in our position for the next decade or so making it politically or financially impossible to strengthen our approach, as we will undoubtedly need to do, if we are to make any real progress in reducing carbon emissions going forward. Indeed our leadership actions in saving the world from the destruction that climate change will surely bring our children, and all life with which we share this planet, will be in tatters if this weak legislation is supported as is.

Tom Moore