

To Senators on the Senate Select Committee on Climate Policy,

The second half of this submission is text provided by Greens MPs. I am not a member of any political party, but my views most closely fit with the Greens. I have written in the past to members of the Government, either independently or as part of a campaign, such as that run by Get Up (I am a member).

I strongly believe the Senate is a house of review that keep Government accountable and where necessary sends inadequate, flawed legislation back to the drawing board. This is what needs to be done with the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme. It is too weak.

I am becoming demoralised, upset and frustrated with the choices Governments of all persuasions continue to make. There has to be a better form of democracy that is not so swayed by those with money and lobbying clout. I joined Get Up as it give me some hope the 'ordinary Australian' can lobby and inspire change for the greater social, environmental, economic good.

I wholeheartedly support a target reduction in Greenhouse Gas Emissions of at least 25% by 2020.

I believe that 25% is feasible and politically possible – with leadership, vision, imagination, the conviction and bravery to make 'hard' choices for the long term future, and an ability to inspire and motivate. I crave bi-partisanship on this issue. It is too important for political point scoring and populism.

The argument for the positive side of adopting such targets needs reinforcing. That is, the benefits a 25% reduction will do for our economy, society, environment requires a concerted Information-Education-Communication campaign. We must show the positives of change. Australians are naturally conservative and prefer the status quo. The status quo is unacceptable and unsustainable. We must realise the world is finite and we have been living beyond our means, the ecological footprint of each Australian is unsustainable.

The economic downturn provides the opportunity for a green revolution and green jobs ie: spend big on and put the incentives in place for green projects. This is what Barack Obama seems to be proposing in the US.

I voted in the last Federal election for leadership, vision, innovation, change and making the hard choices. I voted for bringing Australia 'in from the cold' on the international stage and my country playing a constructive, collaborative, engaged, sincere, inspirational middle-power role. I voted for the dream of Australia choosing a sustainable future and transforming its economy and society and becoming a leader in sustainable technologies; taking advantage of its pollution free natural assets of solar, wind, wave etc rather than its polluting coal.

The focus on 'clean coal' is dangerous. Besides the term being misleading, geo-sequestration is far from proven technology that can be commercially applied any time soon. IF the technology is proven to work, it could be an Australian gift to the world. However in the mean time the proven technologies of solar, wind, geothermal, biomass, wave etc need to be embraced enthusiastically. The price signal needs to be sent to all polluters so that they fast track adaptation, transformation. Why cannot gas, oil and coal producers and energy generators invest in renewables and transform their companies?

A 5% target is a token gesture, incredibly disappointing and distressing. I believe it will tarnish our newly found regard in international circles. Australia cannot go to Copenhagen with such a target. I was hoping that Australia would lead and go to the international community with a truly inspiring target and set of actions to transform our economy.

I believe that the lobbying of the big polluters has won the day and steamrolled the Government's original vision and resolve. I understood that the Government was going to take a 'balanced view'. 5% is hardly balanced given that the international community has agreed to try to get an agreement for binding targets of 25-40%, and scientists are saying a minimum of 25% is required if we want to keep the temperature from rising above 2 degrees.

I wonder where the transformation of the economy to a low carbon, green one is going to get its 'impetus' from? 5%, along with huge compensation, hardly provides the encouragement for the polluters to change how they operate, or move to green alternatives, or sink. The private, corporate sector has the capacity to adapt and go into new areas, but they need a price signal and target signal. I do not believe that 5% will move the 'dinosaur' coal industry and other energy intensive industries to change.

These industries have effectively had a 'free ride': they have not had to pay for the green house gas emission externalities during their lifetimes. They owe the planet, and we as consumers of their products owe the planet. We all have to pay higher prices until the cost of green energy comes down.

I also wonder how we are to get from 5% in 2020 to 60% by 2050? A big ask, we need to be taking on more now, early! It is already late; we are trying to catch up with the runaway train. And we do not know when a threshold level will kick in and make the train speed away from us.

I am ready to pay more. With reference to the poll taken by the Lowy Institute late in 2008, I am ready to pay \$20 plus each month as part of reducing my greenhouse gas emissions: \$20 is the same as I pay every month to each of several Australian charities.

I dream that if and when I own my own abode it will be solar powered and I will be able to feed energy back into the grid and be paid for it.

I have for the last couple of years chosen to purchase green energy from my electricity provider. I have also joined Green Fleet and then later on Climate Friendly to fully offset my car emissions. I have installed energy efficient bulbs, a water efficient shower-head, gas heating rather than electric... I am horrified to learn that with the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme as currently proposed, every Australian's similar, or more concerted, voluntary actions do not contribute to our cuts in emissions, that we are all helping out a big polluter! This is nothing less than ludicrous.

I want my money going to kick start and scale up windfarms, solar farms, geothermal plants, retrofitting buildings, schemes to assist households transform their houses and habits, train infrastructure for freight and passengers, public transport in urban and regional centres, re-training programs and other support for workers of coal and other industries who may lose their jobs etc.

I come from the Snowy Mountains and I fear that we are now guaranteed to lose our unique sensitive Alpine environment, let alone the Murray Darling system and the Great Barrier Reef. I am now working in the Torres Strait and also believe it is likely some of Australia's islands will disappear under water.

I wholeheartedly agree with the following comments by the Greens MPs:

Emissions trading is one of many important tools the government can use to reduce Australia's emissions. By setting a strong target and sending a price signal to the market, a well-designed scheme should help dramatically reduce Australia's emissions at the least cost to the economy and make sure Australia does its fair share to tackle climate change.

However, a badly designed emissions trading scheme will prevent the economic transformation Australia needs, at a cost to both the economy and the environment.

As it stands, the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS) proposed by the Government is a badly designed scheme that will be worse than useless. Its key flaws include an unacceptably weak target, and a design which over-compensates polluters at the expense of the community and environment.

TARGETS

The CPRS target is to reduce Australia's carbon emissions to 5% below 2000 levels by 2020. That effort, if followed by the rest of the world, is a recipe for climate catastrophe. Far from the Rudd Government's goal, as stated in the legislation, of seeing global atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases stabilise at 450 parts per million, it will send the world past 550 ppm and trigger unstoppable feed-back loops. Scientists agree that developed countries like Australia need to reduce their emissions by between 25 and 40 per cent by 2020 if we are to avoid runaway climate change. Clearly, the target range of 5-15% is unacceptably low and must be urgently reviewed.

POLLUTER PAYS

The CPRS as it stands is a pay-the-polluter scheme, not a polluter-pays scheme. By providing Australia's worst polluters with billions of dollars of compensation in cash and free permits to pollute, the CPRS will protect the profits of Australia's worst climate offenders at the expense of clean industries.

It also unfairly transfers the cost of reducing emissions to industries with less lobbying power and to the community at large. Every dollar of compensation that goes to polluters is a dollar less to assist householders and clean industries.

VOLUNTARY REDUCTIONS

In addition to setting such a weak 5% target, the CPRS also fails to take into account voluntary emission reductions from the community. The efforts of everyone from householders to State Governments to reduce emissions will be helpful only in reducing the price pressure on polluters. This must be fixed by taking account of community action and all the policies already in place when setting the scheme caps, and using the scheme to drive more ambitious efforts.

COMPLEMENTARY MEASURES

An emissions trading scheme is just one of the tools the federal government can use to reduce Australia's greenhouse gas emissions. But there are other tools in its toolbox, such as 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. Ending the logging of Australia's native forests would reduce Australia's emissions by substantially more than 5%. All these policies should be pursued regardless of the CPRS.

CERTAINTY

One of the key problems with setting a weak target is that the only certainty business has is that it will need to be changed. Business needs long-term investment horizons in order to make multi-billion dollar decisions. A target of 5% by 2020 set now is likely to lead to many bad investment decisions being made, as business invests in 'low pollution' infrastructure which, in only a few years, will need to be moth-balled, dropped as sunk costs and replaced with zero emissions alternatives. Setting an ambitious, science-based target now will avoid these costly mistakes by putting us on the right path from the outset.

People often think that any action to reduce emissions, even by as little as 5%, will reduce the risk of climate change. In fact we know that there are tipping points in Earth's systems which, if breached, will send our climate spinning out of control with catastrophic consequences for all of us.

If we are to have a reasonable chance of preventing runaway climate change, we must make every effort to avoid these tipping points. That means high-polluting countries like Australia moving towards carbon neutrality as fast as possible, with cuts of at least 40% by 2020.

Please look at the science of this situation, not the politics. Listen to the experts who offer their advice to you during this inquiry, listen to the people of Australia and make the right decision in your recommendations.

Climate Change Minister Penny Wong has described the CPRS as 'better than nothing', but she is wrong. It is worse than useless.

Australia needs a strong, ambitious and fair emissions trading scheme, not a plan that protects polluters and stands in the way of the change we need.

Yours sincerely

Annalisa Koeman