

We are writing this submission as concerned citizens in response to Climate Change issues and the proposed Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme.

We believe a much more significant effort, on the level of wartime commitment, needs to be put into reversing our exponentially rising carbon emissions. Australia should model good global citizenship to help mitigate as much damage as possible, and should prepare to help our own citizens and our global neighbours to adapt as much as will undoubtedly be needed, even with the strongest possible response.

The target of 60 % Carbon Emissions by 2050 is too low. We are already 1 degree above pre-industrial temperature levels and the planet is already committed to at least 2 degrees of warming over the coming century as a result of our past emissions (IPCC 2007), even if we stopped all emissions tomorrow.

Ambitions for mitigation will need to be much tougher than those embodied in the Bali Roadmap because actual climate change is progressing faster than all the predictions, including the recent 2007 IPCC report.

We urge the Government to put forward for community and business discussion, the goal of achieving a 'safe' climate. To reach climate 'safe' levels requires returning CO₂ significantly below current levels, to a stabilisation level between 300 and 350 ppm CO₂ (Hansen et al 2008 p15). This will require

- a rising price on CO₂ emissions
- phasing out coal use except where CO₂ is captured and sequestered
- and a reward system for agricultural and forestry practices that sequester carbon - including reforestation and biochar. (Hansen et al 2008 p15).

We note that CO₂ capture and sequestration technology is not expected to be commercially available within the next 10-20 years.

We believe that Australian State and National leaders fail to appreciate the gravity of the situation - clearly evident in the continued approval for construction of coal-fired power plants, without CO₂ capture. We really need to stop burning coal now, until it can be done 'safely'. Impossible as this may seem, it would actually 'cost the earth' not to do so.

Our economic future, not to mention human survival depends on immediate action to reduce our carbon emissions, much sooner than 2050. We believe Australia needs to stand with the leaders, at the forefront of this global response. This will also reap "early mover" benefits, which will be essential to enable us to be good global neighbours with the capacity to assist our regional neighbours with much larger populations.

We urge you to be proactive on our behalf . We do not have time to wait for other countries to start their programs. Australia has a very high per capita carbon footprint, and our refusal to sign the Kyoto protocol for so long has been partly responsible for stalling global negotiations on reducing carbon emissions.

We realise that this is an enormous task, but we believe it is achievable, if tackled with enough intensity. While it is very likely to be radically transformative of the economy, it would not be ruinous as projected by some business interests.

In February this year, McKinsey & Co published an Australian cost curve for the reduction of greenhouse emissions (<http://www.gbca.org.au/resources/publications/an-australian-cost-curve-for-greenhouse-gas-reduction/1475.htm>), which showed: **significant quantities of 'negative-cost' opportunities are available**. These opportunities would allow Australia to reduce emissions in 2020 by 20 percent below 1990 levels at no net cost to the economy. This is because the contribution to the economy of the negative cost opportunities is enough to pay for other abatement measures up to a marginal cost of A\$62 per tonne CO₂e, representing 270 Mt of abatement. For 2030, an equivalent analysis suggests reductions of 35 percent are achievable at no net cost. This is shown on the curve as the 'break-even' point—the point at which the sum of the negative and positive costs from left to right is zero.

Beyond the obvious negative cost steps suggested in the McKinsey analysis, **we urge the Australian Government** to begin a wartime-speed mobilisation, to achieve a target of 80% CO₂ emissions reduction by 2020, as proposed by Lester Brown of the Earth Policy Institute (2008). **We urge** Australia to lead by example, and to advocate in the 2009 Copenhagen negotiations for a global target of 80% CO₂ emissions reduction by 2020, through well understood existing technologies and strategies including:

- investing in energy efficiency to keep global energy demand from increasing.
- replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy sources for electricity and heat production
- restructuring our transportation systems and reducing coal and oil use in industry
- ending net deforestation worldwide
- planting trees and managing soils to sequester carbon.

“None of these initiatives depends on new technologies. We know what needs to be done to reduce CO₂ emissions 80 percent by 2020. All that is needed now is leadership” (Brown, Larsen, Dorn, Moore, 2008 *Time for Plan B: Cutting Carbon Emissions 80 Percent by 2020*).

Most Insurance companies and risk managers would not accept the risks that governments of the world are taking at the moment. Given the emerging scientific evidence of climate change impacts, prudence dictates moving our decision making to global emergency status to preclude going beyond the point of no return in planetary climate and human destiny terms.

It is now time to focus spending on researching and rolling out renewable energy technologies, such as solar energy. It is shameful that we need to import solar panels from Germany, which has far higher take-up of rooftop solar generation, in a climate which is cloudy two thirds of the time.

We urge the Government to retain and rapidly expand, broad coverage of the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme. **Do not compromise** effective targets and emission reduction pathways by giving away free pollution passes.

Spratt and Sutton among others urge emergency action to move to zero global greenhouse gas emission, and further, net removal of CO₂ from the atmosphere. (Spratt and Sutton 2008 *Climate Code Red*, p264). Compared with wartime, when

over a third of countries' economies are devoted to military spending to meet challenges to survival, and compared with current military spending of around 2.2% of global GDP, it is hard to understand the current national and global political inertia and lack of meaningful investment in solutions.

We have reached a point where governments and communities need to take courageous decisions for long term gain. This is also perhaps **our best, and possibly last opportunity** to redress on a global scale, some of the major ongoing social inequalities and inequities that have beset humanity over its history. We are all in this together. It's time we recognised and acted on that fact. Moving towards an equal per capita carbon budget globally is only fair after all. Rather than increasing spending on a military arms race, we need to invest in the global climate race.

James Hansen from the Goddard Institute for Space Studies, who has been at the forefront of climate science for two decades - and eight other scientists in a peer-reviewed paper published in June 2008 are very clear on the size of the problem, but have not given up hope. They say:

"The most difficult task, phase out over the next 20-25 years of coal use that does not capture CO₂ is Herculean, yet feasible compared to the efforts that went into World War II." (Hansen et al 2008)

In Australian cities, community response to the water crisis has been effective in many places, over a relatively short period of time. It involved clear messages about the true extent of the problem, clear information about possible ways to reduce our use in everyday life, encouragement to think creatively individually, and voluntary compliance with restrictions. We are confident similar processes are possible to reduce household and transport energy use.

Our small community group is trying to do our bit by learning how to live more sustainably and putting this into practice. **We urge** you give the broader Australian community the opportunity to take action for a 'safe' climate, rather than to settle for defeatist, and ultimately futile targets which are more to do with politics than with the scientific evidence. Give people the opportunity to respond as this crisis requires, with mobilisation and investment on a wartime, or global emergency basis.

"The stakes for all life on the planet surpass those of any other crisis. The greatest danger is ignorance and denial." (Hansen et al 2008)

Yours sincerely,

Sue, Bruce and Anna Cooke, Patricia Funnell, Dr Sandra Bayley, Jennie Elston, Dr Julie Davis, Anne Weir, David Hall (on behalf of the members of the St John's Wood Sustainability Group, Queensland 4060.)

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