

## 11. Develop a regional plan for climate impacts

**Increase Australian aid support, prioritise renewable energy and energy efficiency programs in Australia's energy aid, integrate climate change risk into all aid programs, and review Australia's immigration program to support people displaced by climate change impacts within the region.**

Climate change threatens our region's economy, health, aid spending and security. It is vital that governments and aid agencies prepare for its impacts. Urgent action is needed to limit the worst effects of climate change and to address the impacts already locked into the climate system.

- Urgently increase and prioritise renewable energy and energy efficiency programs within the Australian energy aid program (bilateral and multilateral);
- Boost aid support to provide incentives for developing countries to reduce deforestation as a carbon emission abatement strategy;
- Recognise climate change impacts in all parts of Australia's aid program's planning and evaluation to enable the publication of an annual climate footprint;
- Increase aid funding for disaster risk reduction, mitigation and preparedness measures for climate change impacts;
- Review immigration programs and support appropriate resettlement programs
- Increase aid to 0.7% of GNI by 2015 and 0.5% of GNI by 2010.

## 12. Save our rivers and secure water for all Australians

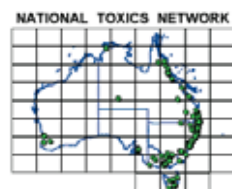
**Address climate impacts on water, develop and accelerate national measures to return water supplies to sustainable levels of extraction, and develop ecologically sustainable measures to increase water security for urban and rural communities.**

Climate change poses a significant risk to future water availability. In the case of the Murray Darling Basin, studies have shown climate change could reduce stream flow by 1,100 billion litres in 20 years (5% of annual flow) and by 3,300 billion litres in 50 years (15% of annual flow).

There is a real danger the environment, which currently lacks a consistent or secure entitlement to water across all jurisdictions, will bear the brunt of reduced inflows while irrigators and other users will retain rights to their current share of water.

Measures should be accelerated to return rivers to health (under the NWI and the Plan for National Water Security), specifically:

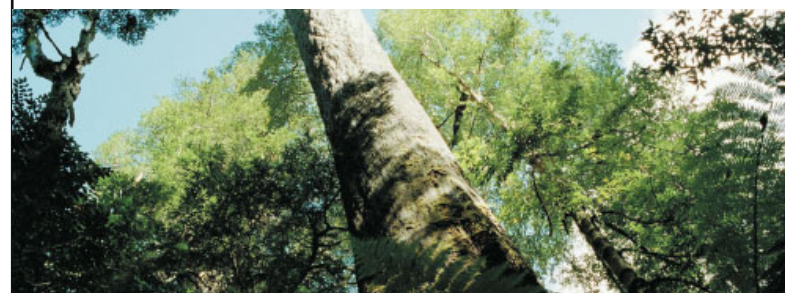
- Tackle over-allocation and over-use.** Set clear timelines and targets for water recovery for the environment including the return of at least 1,500 billion litres to the Murray River by 2014 at the latest.
- Use all available mechanisms for environmental water recovery.** Water recovery should begin immediately, particularly by buying water from willing sellers. This is the most cost-efficient and effective way of returning water to the environment.
- Provide reliable, secure and well managed environmental water for rivers.** There needs to be a legislated environmental manager, with clear goals to achieve the best outcome for river health. This will ensure early gains in water recovery are not eroded over time and secure environmental water in the face of climate change and other risks.
- Protect Wetlands.** Wetlands represent a unique challenge and between water and land management. New national wetland bridge legislation must be developed to ensure international obligations and ecological values of significant wetlands are protected and enhanced.



Authorised for election purposes by Steve Shallhorn, Level 4, 39 Liverpool St, Sydney, 2000. Printed by Almar Press, 279-281 Albert Street, Brunswick, Victoria, 3056.

## Australia's environment groups:

# Climate Change Policy Agenda



This briefing outlines a suite of policies developed by Australia's environment groups to avoid dangerous climate change. The key to achieving this will be for Australia to legislate a national greenhouse gas reduction target of at least 30% below 1990 levels by 2020, and to set a long term reduction target of at least 80% by 2050.

Toward this end, the measures outlined below constitute the minimum response required to protect Australia from dangerous climate change and safeguard the future of our children and future generations.

Immediate action is needed today to stabilise global emissions. This can be achieved by participating as a Kyoto signatory and working to accelerate international emission reductions. As Kyoto requires each country to address its own GHG emissions, it is incumbent upon Australia to reduce its own domestic emissions, as a part of that global solution.

Nuclear reactors are too slow, too dirty, too dangerous and too costly to play a role in Australia's energy future and to constitute any kind of credible response to climate change.

The 2020 target is about implementing solutions that are currently available. They include measures to cap emissions, support energy efficiency, set a target for clean and renewable energy and create a more sustainable agricultural future.

## 1. Reduce greenhouse gas emissions

**Legislate a national greenhouse gas reduction target of at least 30% below 1990 levels by 2020. Set a long term reduction target of at least 80% by 2050.**

In its Fourth Assessment Report, the IPCC was unequivocal: human activity is causing climate change. There is general consensus amongst scientists, governments and environment groups that avoiding dangerous climate change means keeping warming as far below 2°C as possible. The EU is set to take the lead by committing to reduce its own emissions by at least 20% below 1990 levels by 2020 - and to 30% if "international partners" follow suit.

In order to have a good chance of avoiding dangerous climate change global emissions must peak in the next 10-15 years, and reduce by at least 50% by 2050 (compared with 1990 levels) and probably more.

Developed countries like Australia have contributed most to the climate change problem. Australia has one of the highest per capita rates of climate change pollution in the world and developed countries have the greatest economic capacity to make the change required. So, as a developed country, Australia's emission reduction targets should be greater than the global average.

Using a framework of historical responsibility, capacity to act and per capita equity, the emission reduction pathways required to avoid dangerous climate change have been identified as at least 30% by 2020 and at least 80% by 2050 for developed countries.

- Australia must reduce its emissions by at least 30% below 1990 levels by 2020, and at least 80% by 2050.

## 2. Show international leadership and join the Kyoto Protocol

### Ratify the Kyoto Protocol

Ratification of the Kyoto Protocol is an essential first step for any Australian Government that is serious about tackling climate change. Until Australia ratifies Kyoto, we cannot expect less-developed countries to join the global effort. The Kyoto Protocol is the primary international response to climate change and was designed to bring all countries on board with specific obligations to reduce greenhouse gases.

At the 1997 Kyoto climate negotiations Australia was given a generous concession, becoming one of only three industrialised countries allowed to continue increasing greenhouse gas emissions. In the second Kyoto commitment period, 2013 to 2017, Australia must accept a stronger national target to put us on the right track for the necessary greenhouse gas reductions to avoid dangerous climate change.

Trade in carbon credits under clean development mechanisms reached almost \$30 billion in 2006. Australian companies are currently excluded from this market because Australia has not ratified Kyoto.

- Ratify the Kyoto Protocol and engage constructively in the negotiations for a post 2012 commitment period.

**"Ratification of the Kyoto Protocol is an essential first step for any Australian Government that is serious about tackling climate change."**

Photo above, top: Offshore windpark, Denmark by Paul Langrock/Zenit. ©Greenpeace/Langrock. Photo above, bottom: Styx Valley by Tim Georgeson. ©2004 Tim Georgeson/Greenpeace.

### 3. Make polluters pay

#### Establish a price on greenhouse pollution.

It is in Australia's national interest to put a cost on greenhouse pollution. This must reflect the cost of potential damage done to our land, rivers, oceans and urban water systems, as well as to our agriculture, tourism, property and infrastructure sectors. Without a price on pollution, decisions made today won't reflect the future impacts on our climate and the costs to our children and future generations.

The Stern Review found the social cost of greenhouse gas emissions was in the order of AU\$110 per tonne. Introducing a price on greenhouse pollution will drive investment and employment in low carbon industries. A price on greenhouse pollution could be implemented through a carbon tax and/or an emissions trading scheme. Either way, the price must be accompanied by a legislated cap on emissions of at least 30% by 2020.

- Introduce an environmentally effective emissions trading scheme and/or a carbon tax by 2008 to help Australia transition to a carbon constrained economy.

*"Without a price on pollution, decisions made today won't reflect the future impacts on our climate and the costs to our children and future generations."*

### 4. Become energy smart

#### Stabilise total energy consumption by 2010 and achieve 1.5% annual reductions to 2020 through world's best energy efficiency standards for appliances, buildings, vehicles and industrial equipment.

Energy efficiency is one of the quickest and cheapest ways to cut greenhouse pollution. This makes improved energy efficiency an essential component of any plan to cut greenhouse pollution by 30% by 2020. A major energy efficiency push will reap significant economic and productivity benefits for Australia.

In order to make significant improvements in energy efficiency, we will need a policy focus on household building standards, commercial building standards, industrial operations, transport and investing in a smart energy future.

Solar hot water (or systems with equivalent energy consumption) should be made compulsory for all new homes built after 2008. Minimum energy performance standards for household appliances and equipment should also be extended and strengthened. The least efficient appliances should be banned from sale, and plans for improved standards should be fast tracked and introduced by 2010 at the latest. The Building Code of Australia should ensure that the design of homes is substantially strengthened beyond 5 Star, reducing the need for air-conditioning.

Heating, ventilation and air-conditioning (HVAC) services account for 84% of greenhouse gas emissions from commercial buildings. Poor design, commissioning and operation of these services mean that most commercial buildings use twice the energy they need. Co-generation and chilled beam technology could be used more widely in Australian buildings and become standard where practical by 2010.

More broadly, the energy efficiency opportunities audit program should be extended to require all companies that consume more than 7,000 gigajoules per year to audit their energy use and implement all energy saving options.

Furthermore, setting up a National Energy Savings Fund to invest in energy savings projects and services should be a priority. Funds should be raised from either a carbon charge or the auctioning of permits under a national emissions trading scheme. The fund should provide at least \$250 million/year between 2008 and 2012. This would effectively match the existing NSW Energy Savings Fund at a national level. A program to energy retrofit 5% of Australian homes annually, beginning with low-income households should be a key priority for the new fund.

### 5. Invest in a clean, renewable energy future

#### Legislate a renewable energy target of 25% by 2020.

A national scheme is the most effective mechanism for supporting renewable energy in Australia. We therefore need a commitment to increase the mandatory renewable energy target to 25% of total electricity generation by 2020. Currently only 8% of Australia's electricity is generated from renewable sources. Failure to increase the national Mandatory Renewable Energy Target (MRET) will halt new investment in clean, renewable energy because in 2007 it will be fully subscribed.

Governments around the world are increasingly setting legislated targets for renewable energy as the most effective way to drive investment in clean, renewable energy projects capable of meeting a large share of electricity needs. This creates new smart industries and jobs, drives down the price of clean, renewable energy and reduces greenhouse gas emissions. There are a number of simple mechanisms available to achieve a clean, renewable energy target of 25% by 2020:

- Raise the current MRET program target;
- Use market mechanisms such as a solar feed-in tariff;
- Implement a million solar roofs program to kickstart national rollout.

### 6. Switch from dirty, greenhouse polluting technologies

#### No more coal fired power stations, move away from greenhouse polluting subsidies and technologies, ensure greater scrutiny and regulation of coal exports and commit to legislate a stringent greenhouse gas trigger in the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (EPBC Act).

To ensure no net increases in greenhouse gas emissions, a fundamental first step requires ruling out new dirty, coal-fired power stations. Beyond this there are various measures supported by different groups, ranging from regulatory oversight of the industry via the EPBC Act, through export conditions, to phasing out coal exports altogether.

A greenhouse trigger under the EPBC Act would allow the federal government to have direct control over the types of energy intensive projects that would be approved in Australia.

Not only does 85% of Australia's electricity come from burning coal, but our massive coal export industry results in Australia contributing to greenhouse pollution in 35 countries around the world. The private sector should bear a large proportion of the cost of funding the transition towards cleaner technologies. A climate levy on coal exports of at least \$2/tonne would help fund transition for workers, energy efficiency measures and renewable and low emission energy technologies in Australia and around the world.

A price on greenhouse pollution is an important tool to help the transition to a low carbon economy. The introduction of a cost on greenhouse pollution would help stimulate investment in zero and low carbon technologies and send a clear signal to investors. For example a price of around \$35 per tonne of carbon dioxide would help make clean, renewable energy more commercially competitive.

Fossil fuel industries currently enjoy massive subsidies from the Federal government. These subsidies for pollution should be redirected into assistance for workers and communities that will be affected by the inevitable move away from coal. Early planning on a just and fair transition for these workers and communities is essential to ensure there are new sustainable industries delivering job opportunities in affected areas.

*"Subsidies for pollution should be redirected into assistance for workers and communities that will be affected by the inevitable move away from coal."*

### 7. Reject dangerous, costly nuclear power

#### Rule out dirty nuclear power, phase out uranium mining and exports, and prohibit any expansion of the dangerous nuclear industry in Australia.

Recognising that nuclear is the wrong answer to climate change, the following policies should be adopted as a means of reducing Australia's involvement in the nuclear fuel cycle:

- **Shelve the proposed NT waste dump:** stop the current Northern Territory waste dump process and repeal the Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management Act. Establish an independent public inquiry into the management of Commonwealth radioactive waste respectful of the wishes of traditional owners of the land.
- **Ban new uranium mining:** legislate a commitment not to open new uranium mines in Australia. Incorporate the Jabiluka and Koongarra leases into Kakadu National Park and develop a rehabilitation plan for the Ranger uranium mine.
- **Phase out uranium exports:** Step one: commit to no uranium sales to China and Taiwan, and countries that have not ratified the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (eg India); and withdraw uranium sales from any nuclear weapons states who fail to comply with their NPT disarmament obligations. Step two: phase out all other uranium exports.
- **Uphold bans on nuclear fuel cycle:** Maintain the current Commonwealth legal prohibitions on enrichment plants, nuclear fuel fabrication plants, nuclear power plants, and reprocessing facilities.
- **Act on nuclear weapons threat:** Actively engage in steps to halt the threat and spread of nuclear weapons. Oppose all nuclear testing and commit to the abolition of nuclear weapons through a multilateral, time-bound, step by step process for a verifiable abolition treaty.

### 8. Tackle emissions from logging and landclearing

#### End broad-scale land clearing and rapidly transition from most native forest logging to combat greenhouse emissions.

Logging and land-clearing make a significant contribution to climate change. Carbon stored in plant matter returns to the atmosphere in the form of CO<sub>2</sub> or methane when it burns or rots.

Currently 9% of Australian greenhouse gas emissions come from the loss of native vegetation due to landclearing. The level of emissions from forestry operations is not adequately measured but emerging evidence suggests logging of native forests, particularly old growth and high conservation value forests, is a significant contributor to greenhouse pollution. For example, the native forest logging in Victoria over one year releases approximately 2.8 million tonnes of stored carbon or 10 million tonnes of carbon dioxide. This is equivalent to the annual greenhouse gas pollution from 2.4 million cars. It will take at least 150 years to recapture this lost carbon. Standing forests and bushland should also be protected because they remove carbon from the atmosphere.

Best practice land management activities can also assist in reducing greenhouse gas pollution.

- Introduce and enforce clear, defined legislation banning broad-scale clearing of bushland which has not been cleared since 1990 across all states
- Ensure controls on broad-scale clearing are implemented nationally through federal programs such as the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality and the Natural Heritage Trust
- Negotiate with state governments to revise regional forest agreements to rapidly transition out of native forest logging to plantations
- Provide incentives for developing countries to effectively reduce deforestation.

### 9. Reduce greenhouse emissions in the transport sector and promote cleaner cars

#### Remove subsidies that encourage private car use and significantly increase investment in public transport infrastructure.

The transportation sector makes a substantial contribution to Australia's greenhouse gas emissions. In 2004 it accounted for 13.5% of total emissions. Pollution from passenger vehicles dominate transport sector emissions, having increased by 17.7% since 1990.

Under Australia's fringe benefit tax regime, a perverse incentive exists that encourages people who drive leased vehicles to drive them more, leading to more greenhouse gas emissions. This polluting subsidy needs to change to provide incentives to remove cars from the road and encourage other modes of transport.

There is a severe lack of investment in public transport infrastructure in Australia, both interstate and urban. To reduce transport related greenhouse emissions there should be a significant boost in funding for low to zero emissions public transport systems, particularly light and heavy rail, in major cities and for interstate freight and passenger travel. New infrastructure should include passenger and freight rail, light rail, fast train links between cities, bus routes, additional bike paths and walk ways. These would cut pollution, improve air quality, reduce traffic congestion and provide health benefits.

With regard to transport infrastructure, introduce mandatory minimum fuel efficiency standards for all new cars by 2010 equivalent to European standards. Additionally, the Federal Budget should allocate \$1 billion annually for public transport infrastructure. Savings from the removal of fringe benefit tax incentives for corporate cars should help fund this investment, as well as helping the Australian car industry to retool to meet minimum fuel efficiency standards.

### 10. Help native vegetation and wildlife survive and thrive

#### Rapidly develop and support national measures to create connected and protected ecosystem networks to maximise the survival of native wildlife and vegetation threatened by climate change.

Australia is home to nearly 10% of the Earth's animal and plant species, but this rich biodiversity is threatened by land-clearing, invasive species, disease and changed fire patterns. The additional burden of climate change makes our natural habitats even more vulnerable.

To help species and habitats cope with the effects of climate change, it is vital the protected area network is extended and links between protected areas are radically improved. In addition, a comprehensive system of management should be developed and implemented by local communities. This requires the support of national and state governments, best science, Indigenous traditional knowledge and the experience of farmers and community groups.

Funding instruments should be developed to recognise the greenhouse benefits from conservation and restoration activities. Restoring connectivity and carbon to the land can have mutually reinforcing benefits. Further investment is needed to protect and rebuild the continent's underlying ecological processes, such as water flows, movement of migratory species, ecological fire management and coastal/land interactions.

- Substantially increase funds to the National Reserve System (NRS) to \$250 million over 3 years to establish core protected terrestrial and marine reserves. An expanded NRS should include the creation of Indigenous Protected Areas and the protection of Cape York Peninsula as a World Heritage area contingent upon the support and consent of Traditional Owners.
- End activities that reduce connectivity across the landscape such as broad scale land clearing and logging high conservation value and old growth forests.
- Recognise the greenhouse benefits of ecological restoration activities when funding and planning climate change responses.
- Invest in conservation programs that protect and rebuild the underlying ecological processes of the continent