

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Socialist Alliance

In line with what is necessary to avert runaway climate change, i.e. keep temperature rises under 2degC, the Socialist Alliance supports a 60% emissions reduction by 2020 and 90% by 2030 compared to 1990 levels. Moreover we would ratify Kyoto and support an emergency program to phase out coal and rapidly make renewable energy the main source for the power grid. We would end the mining and processing of uranium and pull Australia out of the nuclear fuel cycle. We would shift freight to rail and trial free public transport.

Coalition

The Coalition Government moved quickly and decisively more than a decade ago to establish a comprehensive climate change strategy, including the establishment of the world's first ever dedicated climate change agency— the Australian Greenhouse Office — in 1998.

Since 1996, the Coalition Government has committed \$3.5 billion to addressing climate change, including \$741 million in the most recent Budget. We are well on track to meeting our 108 per cent emissions target, set under the Kyoto Protocol. Indeed, we are one of the few industrialised countries positioned well to do so.

Internationally, Australia will continue to lead on climate change. At the recent APEC meeting in Sydney, Australia — under the leadership of the Prime Minister — led the APEC economies to agree to a new regional consensus on the post-2012 international climate change framework, including a multilateral agreement that includes an overall global emissions reduction goal to which all countries contribute.

The Coalition Government will support international emissions reductions obligations that are environmentally effective, equitable and supportive of least-cost pathways for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The existing Kyoto Protocol does not deliver this. That is why we have not ratified Kyoto. Indeed, the structural flaws inherent in the Kyoto approach risk putting the world on the wrong pathway to addressing global warming.

Regionally, Australia is leading practical technolor programs to reduce emissions, including the \$150 million Asia Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate and the Australia-China Joint Co-ordination Group on Clean Coal. In addition, the \$200 million Global Initiative on Forests and Climate will help address the estimated 20 per cent of global emissions resulting from deforestation.

Domestically, the Prime Minister announced in June that Australia will establish a world-class emissions trading system, beginning no later than 2012. In doing so, Australia will set a long term goal for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. These are critical decisions for Australia's economic future. Unlike Labor, we believe in careful assessment and detailed modelling regarding the impact of a target on the Australian economy and Australian families.

The Coalition Government's plan to address climate change will be further strengthened with the Prime Minister's announcement on 21 October 2007 that a re-elected Coalition Government would establish a new Climate Change Fund.

Revenues for the new Climate Change Fund will come from the sale of permits to firms through the emissions trading scheme and will be reinvested into climate change and

related initiatives. The Climate Change Fund will help to further support climate action and importantly, assist households most impacted by the transition to a low-carbon economy, particularly low-income earners and pensioners.

This initiative builds on the Government's comprehensive climate strategy. The Coalition recognises that low emissions energy sources have an important role to play in a carbon-constrained energy future. These include renewable energy, such as solar and wind, as well as fossil fuel fired electricity generation where carbon capture and storage is used. Under the Government's \$500 million Low Emissions Technology Demonstration Fund, six projects have been announced covering clean coal and renewable energy technologies, leveraging \$2.5 billion in private sector investment.

In addition, the Mandatory Renewable Energy Target (MRET), introduced in 2001, has leveraged around \$3.5 billion in renewable energy investment and will increase renewable energy generation by more than 50 per cent by 2010. The Government has allocated over \$1 billion to support renewable energy, including solar and wind.

To further support renewable and other clean energy technologies, the Coalition has announced it will introduce a single, comprehensive national Clean Energy Target (CET) of 30,000 gigawatt-hours per year by 2020. This is in addition to the baseline generation under MRET of around 16,000 gigawatt hours.

Based on electricity projections for 2020 the total clean energy share of electricity production, including the CET, is conservatively estimated to be around 15 per cent of Australia's electricity demand in 2020. The new CET, which will reduce red tape for industry, will drive additional investment in renewable and other low emissions electricity generation as the Australian emissions trading scheme is introduced.

We will continue to support households and communities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, building on our policies and programmes to phase out inefficient incandescent light bulbs, increase the solar panel rebate for households from \$4,000 to \$8,000, new rebates of \$1,000 for the installation of solar and heat pump water heaters, and vouchers to provide every Australian school with up to \$50,000 to install solar hot water systems and rainwater tanks.

Australia needs to be well placed to adjust to any future impacts associated with climate change which is why we have a world class climate change science capacity, in which the Government continues to invest. In April this year, the Prime Minister announced \$126 million for a National Climate Change Adaptation Centre, and \$44 million to enhance the core climate change science capability of the CSIRO.

Labor

The Labor Party did not provide a response for this forum. Policy information has been collated from the ALP website www.alp.org.au

Under a Rudd Labor Government, Australia will become the clean energy hub of the Asia-Pacific, making clean energy central to Australia's economic and environmental future.

Specific initiatives to help Australian businesses take a larger slice of the renewable energy market will include a \$15 million Clean Energy Export Strategy and up to for a \$20 million Clean Energy Enterprise Connect Centre.

Labor will harness clean energy research, innovation and enterprise, so that Australia can build a low carbon economy and export climate change solutions to the world. The

global market for renewable energy is set to be worth US\$750 billion a year by 2016, and more than 17,000 Australians are already employed in renewable energy and related industries, most of them in regional Australia.

Other Labor policies that will help grow Australia's renewable energy industry include:

- substantially increasing the Mandatory Renewable Energy Target;
- offering \$10,000 low interest loans for Australian families to undertake green home improvements;
- providing rebates for rooftop solar power systems and for solar hot water across Australia; and
- the establishment of a \$50 million Australian Solar Institute and a \$50 million geothermal initiative.

A Rudd Labor Government will help Australia's farming community get through the current drought and will invest \$60 million – over three years – to help them respond to climate change. Under the plan, scientists will work with farmers on practical pilot projects to identify better farming practices such as stubble retention (leaving roots in the soil after harvesting) and minimum tillage such as seed drilling. Federal Labor believes that climate change is the greatest challenge confronting Australia's farming future.

Labor is committed to signing the 1997 Kyoto protocol. Only Labor will tackle climate change – securing Australia's long term prosperity while making the transition to a low-carbon future.

Christian Democrats

The CDP believes that environmental issues are important because the environment is Godgiven and sustains life. We have an obligation to responsibly manage the environment and to mitigate, where feasible, environmental change and pollution. However, it needs to be remembered that the earth was made for humankind. The environment needs to be kept in perspective as the servant to humankind and not elevated to the point where human lives are sacrificed in favour of preserving the life of some plants or animals

CDP:

- Accepts that the scientific debate around climate change is unresolved and in that sense the CDP remains agnostic in respect to scientific elements of the climate change debate.
- Will not commit itself to any course of action that is certain to damage economic prosperity if the hoped-for benefits to the environment are uncertain or disproportionately costly.
- Does not support carbon trading schemes as they are considered futile and create an unnecessary burden on our economy.
- Does not support Australia being a signatory to the Kyoto protocol.
- Encourages the development of economic alternatives to fossil fuels and cleaner coal mining technologies.
- Wants to see a more balanced media treatment of the debate and issues surrounding climate change in school curriculum and the media.
- Supports a forestry policy that balances sustainable environmental practices with the interests and long term viability of rural and regional forestry communities.
- The implementation of viable programs to deal with salt damage to agricultural land.

Australian Democrats

The Australian Democrats have a very extensive platform of action on environmental issues, including to reduce greenhouse emissions, develop clean and renewable sources of energy, encourage efficient use of resources, and safeguard the environment.

Climate change alone is a serious economic, environmental and social issue for Australia. The Australian Democrats will work to ensure the challenge of climate change is taken seriously without unfairly burdening our community's most disadvantaged people. Emissions targets must be set as soon as possible at 20-30% by 2020 and 60-90% by 2050, depending on the science. The Democrats have now become the first political party to announce the call for a renewable energy target of 50% by 2030. The Howard Government's so-called clean energy target is 15% by 2020.

We support the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol and other international agreements and continue to press Australia and the USA and other nations to do likewise. We will also take a lead role in post-Kyoto negotiations to achieve international cooperation in science and technology exchange, adaptation efforts, and decisive responses to avoid dangerous climate change.

We have an extensive platform on water management. It includes reform of rural and agricultural water pricing to reward reduced consumption and fund high efficiency irrigation infrastructure to achieve a better balance of river water extraction and environmental flows. Work with state and local governments to overcome the jurisdictional barriers to having a nationally-consistent planning, regulation and practices in water use.

Our comprehensive urban water plan includes development of an integrated, strategic national urban Water Policy, underpinned by agreed targets to deliver short and long-term water sustainability, taking into account climate change, population and environment needs; reform water pricing to fund major public investment in water infrastructure; develop standards and guidelines for water saving measures; fund more generous rebate programs for retrofit plumbing; extend the Democrats-initiated water efficiency and labelling scheme; and tighten standards of industrial discharge.

See our '25 steps to healthy environment' for more on our policy and actions http://www.democrats.org.au/docs/ActionPlans/ElectionPlatform_ClimateLandWater_2007.pdf

Greens

Protecting our environment and conserving the diversity of life are essential for the wellbeing of all life on Earth. Habitat loss and fragmentation, together with the spread of invasive species, pose serious threats. Loss of this biodiversity makes our ecosystems less resilient to climate change.

The Greens have a long-term commitment to protecting our environment. We take a comprehensive approach to conservation that recognises the interconnectedness of land and marine ecosystems.

The Greens will:

- End broad-scale land-clearing and clearing of remnant vegetation
- Fund and enforce recovery plans for threatened and endangered species

- Ensure a comprehensive, adequate and representative system of protected areas
- Support landowners to protect and restore nature conservation values on their land
- End the logging of old growth and high conservation value forests
- Introduce an Oceans Act to ensure the sustainable use of our marine and coastal resources
- Support a comprehensive international ban on commercial and “scientific” whaling.

The Greens have recognised that climate change is serious and urgent for more than a decade, but governments and industry are yet to take real action. If global warming of 2°C above pre-industrial levels occurs the impacts will be too severe and the risks of runaway climate change too great. Urgent action to stop the growth in greenhouse gas emissions must start now.

The Greens recognise that energy efficiency and renewable energy options present huge opportunities to create new jobs and export dollars in clean technologies.

The Greens are the only parliamentary party opposed to all aspects of the nuclear industry. Nuclear power is directly linked to the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Future generations must not be burdened with its toxic waste for which there is no safe disposal. When renewable energy and energy efficiency can reduce emissions faster and cheaper, nuclear power is just a dangerous distraction. The Greens will end the mining and export of uranium and oppose the establishment of nuclear power plants, nuclear fuel processing, enrichment facilities and radioactive waste dumps.

The Greens will:

- Base all climate policy on constraining global warming to less than 2°C
- Introduce binding, science-based targets to reduce emissions by 30% below 1990 levels by 2020 and 80% by 2050
- Put a price on carbon
- Introduce energy efficiency targets and standards for appliances, buildings and infrastructure
- Significantly increase renewable energy production by boosting the current 2% target to 15% of our electricity by 2012 and 25% by 2020
- Provide a long-term price guarantee for renewably produced electricity
- Redirect massive subsidies for fossil fuels to renewable energy and energy efficiency
- Plan to help coal communities move to sustainable industries as coal use and exports are phased out
- End logging of our old growth and high conservation value forest carbon stores
- Ratify the Kyoto Protocol, and lead the negotiation of a strong, legally binding second phase.

Socialist Equality

The SEP advocates an internationally co-ordinated plan to combat global warming and environmental disaster.

The subordination of all human activity to the profit motive and the accumulation of personal wealth threaten to unleash an environmental catastrophe.

None of the mounting environmental problems – including the water crisis, deforestation, and climate change – can be resolved within the framework of the capitalist system. The slashing of carbon emissions requires nothing less than the complete reorganization of the world economy, taking production out of the hands of the major polluters and placing it under the democratic control of working people.

The Greens, Democrats, Socialist Alliance and Labor all are committed to signing the 1997 Kyoto protocol. The Christian Democrats, Liberals and Nationals are against this and have been for the last 10 years.