

## **General submission on introducing measures designed to limit population growth**

By Ian Rudd, Roleystone WA

It is clear that population growth is a (if not **the**) major driver of environmental degradation including climate change brought on by GHG emissions. It is also known that Australia's per capita contributions to these emissions are amongst the highest in the world. It follows that if, as is generally recommended, an absolute cap is placed on future GHG emissions for the nation as a whole then steps have to be taken to stabilize population growth as each increment in total population will, other things being equal, increase the average per capita reduction of GHG emissions required to meet whatever cap is imposed.

Steps need to be taken to reduce or discourage both net immigration and fertility rates within Australia and indeed throughout the world, particularly in many of the undeveloped nations where population growth rates are high.

### ○ **Net Immigration**

1. Nearly all of the migrants to Australia come from countries whose per capita GHG emissions are well below ours. On balance therefore it is probable that the average emissions from these migrants will increase merely by virtue of the fact that they are exposed to a society that is structured around and subjected to a higher degree of fossil fuel dependency than are most other nations.
2. Many migrants under current immigration policies tend to be younger than is the average for the resident population. The demographic shift to a younger population predisposes a shift to a higher fertility rate than would otherwise be the case. More people will mean more GHG emissions or a greater effort at reduction of per capita emissions.
3. Many migrants are encouraged to come to Australia as a result of efforts on the part of authorities to fill a) skill shortages or b) labour shortages arising amongst other things as a result of the boom in mineral extraction and in some states as a result of high levels of road and other infrastructure works encouraged by high levels of Federal and State Government spending in this area.

Better and more accessible education systems should be quickly implemented to provide an internal solution to skills shortages while the labour shortages can largely be addressed by curtailing government expenditure on infrastructure during boom times as well as by setting economically stringent goals to reduce new marginal mineral developments by setting strict Return on Capital hurdles which have to be met in order to obtain development approvals. More stringent environmental standards could also be imposed in order to limit environmentally damaging activities to those that can clearly demonstrate that the economic or social benefits outweigh environmental costs. Environmental costs should in this context include the direct **and indirect costs** of increased GHG emissions likely to result from the activity.

- **Fertility rates within Australia**
  1. Policies to discourage (rather than encourage as is presently the case) increases in family size should be implemented perhaps even to the extent of imposing a carbon tax on families having more than, say, two children.
- **Fertility rates in the undeveloped nations**
  1. Aid targeted at helping to reduce the population growth in the poorest countries should be given a high priority. In this respect there are various forms of assistance that are recognized as being effective in helping to reduce fertility rates in these countries. Aid designed to help educate and empower women as well as to improve access to family planning assistance and the distribution of condoms is important in this regard and should be afforded a high priority in Australia's foreign aid programs.

*General reference: - Lester R Brown – Plan 3.0B Mobilizing to Save Civilization published January 2008 by Earth Policy Institute*