

General Submission to Garnaut Review

What is GetUp?

GetUp is an independent, grass-roots community advocacy organisation giving everyday Australians opportunities to get involved in democracy and hold politicians accountable on important issues. After two and a half years of operation, GetUp has a membership of over 280,000 people. GetUp is often described as Australia's first independent political movement.¹ GetUp does not back any particular party, but aims to build an accountable and progressive nation - a country with economic fairness, social justice and environmental sustainability at its core. GetUp uses new technologies as a means to engage Australians in public life. GetUp is a not-for-profit organisation and receives no money from any political party or the government.

GetUp Members' Message to the Garnaut Review

In December 2007, GetUp conducted an unprecedented exercise in participatory democracy, holding hundreds of 'Vision GetTogethers' in nearly every electorate in the country. 32,000 GetUp members voted on the issues raised in the GetTogethers in an online survey, and the results were compiled into a People's Agenda for the new Parliament. Environmental sustainability and combating climate change was overwhelmingly the top priority by a sizeable margin – and over 70% of respondents put environmental sustainability and climate change in their top three priorities.

Through the Vision GetTogethers, GetUp members sent a very strong message calling for courageous leadership on climate change from both the Rudd government and the Garnaut Review.

GetUp members want meaningful action to combat climate change and sustainably manage our water, forests and marine habitats. They are overwhelmingly and urgently concerned about climate change over any other issue facing the nation. They want strong and binding emissions reduction targets by 2020, federal funding for research into renewable and alternative energy (but certainly not nuclear), and a robust carbon tax or trading scheme that doesn't favour large polluters. They are happy to pay more for their energy needs to meet this end (although measures must ensure this is equitable).

More than this, GetUp members want Australia to be a world leader on climate change and environmental sustainability. Leadership will create the culture change necessary domestically and set

¹ Caroline Baum, 'Radical chic - suddenly, it's cool to care', SMH November 17, 2007 <http://www.smh.com.au/news/federal-election-2007-news/radical-chic--suddenly-its-cool-to-care/2007/11/16/1194766972766.html>, Anne Summers, 'Room with a view or two - a homely taste of the future' SMH 3 January 2008, <http://www.smh.com.au/news/anne-summers/room-with-a-view-or-two--a-homely-taste-of-the-future/2008/01/02/1198949900181.html>

GETUP

PO Box A105
Sydney South, NSW,
1235,
Phone: 02 9264 4037
Fax: 02 9283 1371
info@getup.org.au
www.getup.org.au

the example internationally to avert climate disaster. GetUp members call on the Government not just to legislate and fund, but to proactively lead the way in creating this culture of sustainability.

“We have 7 years to cap our CO₂ emissions. It’s an emergency. All hands on deck.”

“We can lead this and benefit or we can wait and be hammered by the economics of the changes ahead.”

The GetUp membership is extremely concerned about climate change and will continue to be very active in calling for climate and energy policy change.

Recommendations:

1. Modeling Low Emission Scenarios and Targets: 350 ppm

GetUp shares the Climate Institute, the Australian Conservation Foundation, and the World Wildlife Fund’s concern that the emissions scenario modelling being used by the Review is grossly inadequate.

The Review’s Terms of Reference of the Garnaut Review include only two emissions scenarios of 450 and 550 parts per million (ppm) of carbon equivalent. At 450ppm CO₂-e, the risk of global temperature increase exceeding 2 degrees Celsius over pre-industrial levels is 52%. At 400ppm CO₂-e, the risk is 26%. These odds are simply not good enough when we are gambling on the future of our planet.

The latest science shows that we must aim to stabilise global CO₂ levels at 350 ppm CO₂-e. In his recent paper, *Target CO₂: Where Should Humanity Aim?*, NASA Goddard Climate Scientist James Hansen argues:

We suggest an initial objective of reducing atmospheric CO₂ to 350 ppm, with the target to be adjusted as scientific understanding and empirical evidence of climate effects accumulate. Limited opportunities for reduction of non-CO₂ human-caused forcings are important to pursue but do not alter the initial 350 ppm CO₂ target. This target must be pursued on a timescale of decades, as paleoclimate and ongoing changes, and the ocean response time, suggest that it would be foolhardy to allow CO₂ to stay in the dangerous zone for centuries. A practical global strategy almost surely requires a rising global price on CO₂ emissions and phase-out of coal use except for cases where the CO₂ is captured and sequestered. The carbon price should eliminate use of unconventional fossil fuels, unless, as is unlikely, the CO₂ can be captured.

A reward system for improved agricultural and forestry practices that sequester carbon could remove the current CO₂ overshoot. With simultaneous policies to reduce non-CO₂ greenhouse gases, it appears still feasible to avert catastrophic climate change. Present policies, with continued construction of coal-fired power plants without CO₂ capture, suggest that decision-makers do not appreciate the gravity of the situation. We must begin to move now toward the era beyond fossil fuels. Continued growth of

GETUP

PO Box A105
Sydney South, NSW,
1235,
Phone: 02 9264 4037
Fax: 02 9283 1371
info@getup.org.au
www.getup.org.au

greenhouse gas emissions, for just another decade, practically eliminates the possibility of near-term return of atmospheric composition beneath the tipping level for catastrophic effects.

The most difficult task, phase-out over the next 20-25 years of coal use that does not capture CO₂, is herculean, yet feasible when compared with the efforts that went into World War II. The stakes, for all life on the planet, surpass those of any previous crisis. The greatest danger is continued ignorance and denial, which could make tragic consequences unavoidable.²

GetUp recognises that it will be difficult to avoid driving atmospheric greenhouse pollution levels up, before we bring them back down. GetUp submits that a 350 ppm target is a sustainable long-term target. GetUp urges the Garnaut review to undertake modelling on the basis that Australian emissions will grow until 2012, at which point (if not before), it is imperative to stabilise and reduce emissions to 350 ppm CO₂-e. We therefore urge the Review to model an emissions stabilization level of 350 ppm CO₂-e.

The environmentalist, writer and scholar-in-residence at Middlebury College (USA) Bill McKibben states, “It may be an arcane scientific number, but 350 parts per million carbon dioxide in the atmosphere means the line between a planet with a bright future, and the worst effects of climate change”³.

2. Include Assessment of Clearing Native Forests Contribution to Climate Change

Native forests are invaluable sources of carbon storage. GetUp urges the Garnaut Review to include a comprehensive assessment of the impact of native forests clearing on climate change. Major emissions result from wood product degradation, burning of logging waste and soil disturbance.

New research finds that preventing deforestation is a “large, immediate and perishable opportunity” to massively reduce emissions⁴. Costing out the real value of native forests will undoubtedly prove that Australian’s native forests are better left in the ground.

GetUp supports the South East Regional Conservation Council’s recommendation that forestry sequestration and emissions be counted in carbon accounting and reporting systems. If the systems fail to take into account the benefit of retaining established forests, a perverse incentive to destroy native forests will be created – despite their huge value as carbon sinks.

² James Hansen, Makiko Sato, Pushker Kharecha, David Beerling, Valerie Masson-Delmotte, Mark Pagani, Maureen Raymo, Dana L. Royer & James C. Zachos, *Target Co2: Where Should Humanity Aim?* (2008) at <<http://www.columbia.edu/~jeh1/>>.

³ Bill McKibben, *Letter from Bill McKibben* (2008) at <http://www.350.org/?page_id=20>

⁴ Stephen Gormer, *An Australian Cost Curve for Greenhouse Gas Reduction* (2008) McKinseys.

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PO Box A105
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1235,
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In March 2008, GetUp launched a campaign calling on the Garnaut Review to examine the full climate impact of logging that may feed a pulp mill proposed in the Tamar Valley, Tasmania. Over 30,000 Australians signed the petition, which reads:

“Dear Professor Garnaut,

Australia already has a large, cheap and immediate source of CO₂ abatement - the carbon carrying capacity of our native forests. We encourage you to widen the parameters of your inquiry into their full value in meeting Australia's emissions targets.

We ask that you provide a full carbon assessment of the impact of logging our forests, in particular Tasmania's forests destined for the pulp mill, including the serious carbon loss in converting native forests to plantations, the economic value in leaving them intact as sources of sequestration, and the role they can play in an emissions trading scheme.”

3. Energy Efficiency Standards and Public Transport

Australia currently lags behind the rest of the world in energy efficiency standards for vehicles and buildings. Australia can get smart about energy use through a package of energy efficiency standards for appliances, buildings, vehicles and industrial equipment. This will have a large and immediate impact on reducing greenhouse pollution and save money for consumers and businesses. Australia must set a legislated target to stabilise total energy consumption by 2010.

Transport is a large source of greenhouse pollution in Australia. Strict vehicle fuel efficiency standards help reduce greenhouse gas emissions from transport. In 2006, just one Australian manufactured car model had an efficiency of more than 10 litres per 100 kilometres⁵. The European Union is soon to legislate mandatory emissions standards of 130 grams of CO₂ per 100 kilometres for cars⁶.

GetUp recommends that the federal Government mandate fuel efficiency standards at least equivalent to those in Europe for all new cars sold in Australia, remove fringe benefits tax concessions for corporate cars and redirect funds to assist the Australian car industry to retool to meet new standards. Australia should move quickly to electric and plug-in electric cars for urban uses.

Fuel efficient cars are only part of the clean transport solution. Other measures that must be introduced increased funding to public transport and a price on carbon to encourage the development and use of alternative transport.

⁵ Australian Conservation Foundation, *Promote Cleaner Cars: Policy Brief 3.4* (2007) at 1.

⁶ Ibid.

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4. Transition from Fossil Fuels to Renewable Energy

Australia has the potential to be a world leader in renewable energy and clean technology.

GetUp recommends that all new electricity sources in Australia generate power in a renewable way. A mandatory renewable energy target of *at least 25%* by 2020 is the first step in transitioning Australia from fossil-fuel based energy to renewables.

The *Australian Financial Review* reported on April 2 2008 that the Australian Aluminium Council has lobbied Professor Garnaut to include analysis of the economic cost of a mandatory renewable energy target (MRET) in the Review, claiming that such a scheme will increase electricity costs to the point of undermining power-intensive industries exposed to export competition. Dr. Guy Pearse's submission to the Review outlines the outcomes sought by the fossil fuel lobby, such as the Australian Industry Greenhouse Network, including that the MRET be phased out. GetUp strongly supports extending the MRET since it guarantees Australia begin a large-scale transition away from fossil fuels.

GetUp supports federal funding into research, development and rapid deployment of renewable energy technologies. These technologies are already available commercially, and, combined with a nationwide energy efficiency push, will fundamentally transform Australia's energy infrastructure. We urge the Review to focus on truly sustainable, long-term solutions like renewable energy and avoid false solutions, like nuclear, that have major negative environmental, social and economic impacts.

One first step in the transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy is levelling the playing field through removing the \$9 billion worth of fossil fuel subsidies the fossil fuel industry received in the past federal budget⁷.

GetUp supports a price on carbon and other greenhouse gases as a way to make the transition away from fossil fuels. This price signal could be in the form of a carbon tax or a well-designed and carefully regulated cap and trade scheme. GetUp will provide further input on an emissions trading scheme in a future submission solely focused on this topic.

5. Green Job and Green-Collar Job Creation

Reducing Australia's greenhouse gas emissions will create thousands of new green professional and green-collar jobs for Australia. To stop climate change, we need to move away from fossil fuels and start getting serious about energy efficiency and renewable energy. We need to weatherise homes, build more public transport, retrofit office blocks, grow food locally, and install wind turbines and solar panels in every community. This will take tens of thousands of people and millions of hours of work. It will create jobs and stimulate new industries. To stop climate change, we need not only good policies but also the people to do the work to implement these policies.

⁷ Chris Riedy, *Energy and Transport Subsidies in Australia: 2007 Update* (2007) Institute for Sustainable Futures, Sydney.

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GetUp recommends that the Garnaut Review, as part of its economic modelling of emission reduction trajectories, models the impact that reducing emissions will have on job creation. Previously, the fossil fuel lobby argued that taking action on climate change will create job losses. If the Garnaut Review models the job *creation* opportunities that strong emissions reduction targets will bring, it will greatly assist the Australian community in seeing the opportunities that climate mitigation can bring.

In the words of 23-year old GetUp member Nicky Ison, 2006 National Convenor of the Australian Student Environment Network:

Governments here in Australia have supported unsustainable industries such as the fossil fuel industry for over one hundred years. This support has come in the form of subsidies, research and development, infrastructure and training. Green industries cannot compete due to the existence of an uneven playing field. If we are to seriously tackle climate change, governments have a responsibility to not only level the energy playing field but to actively support the development of the clean energy industry as an integral part of the solution to stop dangerous climate change. As a first step, the federal government needs to invest in creating thousands of new green jobs for today's young people. We need the people to do the work to save the climate⁸.

6. Conclusion

GetUp's Vision GetTogethers sent a strong message that climate change is a top priority for Australians.

Professor Garnaut, GetUp urges you to look at all the latest science that shows climate change tipping points are much sooner than previously expected. This means revising your research parameters to model 350 ppm CO₂-e as a long-term sustainability target to ensure your report is up-to-date with the latest science.

Professor Garnaut, GetUp urges you to be courageous in calling for the strong action that is needed to safeguard our climate. The clock *is* ticking. At this moment in Australia's history, all choices are important. All decisions are urgent. We *are* running out of time. Australians are counting on you to show leadership in setting out a report that outlines a vision for the fundamental changes to our economy and society needed to address the climate crisis.

Professor Garnaut: You may be confident in the fact that the GetUp community of over 280,000 Australians will stand firmly behind you to assist you in raising the profile of your Review and in highlighting the fact that strong emission reduction targets are needed.

Professor Ross Garnaut – Be Our Climate Hero!

⁸ Nicola Ison, email communication to GetUp, 20 March 2008

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