



PolMin
influencing public policy
for the common good

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To Professor Ross Garnaut
Garnaut Climate Change Review
By Email: contactus@garnautreview.org.au

Climate Change: Global, National and Local approaches for the Common Good

Climate Change is the most complicated social and economic problem of our time. It requires principled, ethical leadership and urgent action. PolMin believes that the Australian Government must support a global plan, engage in national investment and champion local consumer education.

Global Plan

PolMin supports the Australian Government stimulating a global carbon economy by establishing its own carbon price and trading scheme. We support your discussion paper recommending large, immediate cuts to carbon and bold targets. We also support diplomatic efforts to engage the USA, China and India in a fair global carbon compact.

However, we are concerned that too much emphasis is being placed on an Emissions Trading Scheme, when other commitments would have a significant effect on reducing emissions in Australia. We believe that climate change is too urgent to leave to market forces alone. We believe that the Australian Government must spend to secure the future.

National Investment – spending for climate security

We recommend the Australian Government:

1. **Adopt a Renewable Energy Target of 25% by 2020.** Renewable Investment is the Snowy Mountain scheme of the new millennium – important for our energy independence and economy and nation building. All fossil fuel energy subsidies and tax breaks should cease and be redirected towards renewable energy providers.
2. **Acknowledge the role cars play in greenhouse pollution by tying all Federal Government road expenditure to ensuring public transport solutions are embedded into the new roads.**
3. **Award tenders and contracts only to entities who supply Carbon Emission Reduction Plans and/or a Renewable Energy Use Plans.**

Local Solutions – empowering consumers

We also believe that the Catholic Social Teaching principle of subsidiarity, sheds light on how government should manage climate change locally.



www.polmin.com.au

PO BOX 413
CARLTON SOUTH VIC 3053
P: (03) 9728 2128; M: 0409 590 178
E: tkovac@polmin.com.au

“The principle of subsidiarity places responsibility as close as possible to the grassroots. The people or groups most directly affected by a decision or policy should have a key decision-making role. They should only be interfered with in order to support them in cases of need, and to help coordinate their activities with the activities of the rest of society with a view to the common good.”

- Sandi Cornish “Brief Introduction to Catholic Social Teaching”,
www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au

Hence, we call on the Australian Government to take steps to help make Australian consumers Climate stewards, the most environmentally aware in the world by:

1. **Undertaking a National Climate Census.** Encourage all householders and businesses to audit their energy and water usage, the energy efficiency of their appliances and lights and travel activities. The information derived by the ABS should enable best practice models for homes and businesses, recommend targets and incentives and create an effective education campaign. It would also provide a national audit event
2. **Setting a National Carbon Diet goal** – a National Energy Efficiency Target. Australia should be aiming toward a 1% electricity demand reduction by 2015.
3. **Establishing a National Climate Friendly Consumer register**, a one-stop shop which lists products and services that are carbon friendly and energy efficient as well as opportunities for offsetting carbon emissions.

PolMin refers the Australian Government to *Greening Communities*, a new project involving Church Resources (a voluntary buying cooperative established to assist churches obtain affordable goods and services), Catholic Earthcare and Eco Community where Church and non-profit groups will be provided with:

- a. Expertise to adopt environmentally friendly product solutions.
- b. Environmentally friendly products and services through partner suppliers.
- c. Demand Register For Environmental Solutions, which assists church and not-for-profit organisations to aggregate demand in their local area.
- d. Independent assessors who provide free auditing to help non-profits find the most appropriate approach and products for their own sites.

Please visit: http://www.churchresources.com.au/default2.asp?active_page_id=121

4. **Empowering a climate consumer watchdog to limit the impact of climate costs on low income consumers.** PolMin supports the work of St Vincent De Paul, the Brotherhood of St Laurence and ACOSS investigating ways to limit climate change costs on those Australians already marginalized and disadvantaged.

Please find enclosed a copy of our Climate Change policy for your consideration.

We look forward to your further reports.

Yours faithfully

Tanja Kovac
National Co-ordinator
PolMin



www.polmin.com.au

PO BOX 413
CARLTON SOUTH VIC 3053
P: (03) 9728 2128; M: 0409 590 178
E: tkovac@polmin.com.au



Climate Change in Australia: Global, National and Local approaches for the common good.

“Life often involves tensions between important values. This can mean difficult choices. However, we must find ways to harmonize diversity with unity, the exercise of freedom with the common good, short-term objectives with long-term goals. Every individual, family, organization, and community has a vital role to play. The arts, sciences, religions, educational institutions, media, businesses, nongovernmental organizations, and governments are all called to offer creative leadership. The partnership of government, civil society, and business is essential for effective governance.”

- Earth Charter

Background

Climate Change is the most complicated social and economic problem of our time. It requires principled, ethical leadership and urgent action. It requires a global plan, national investment and local consumer education. Ironically, to prevent Climate Change, we need a change of climate; a shift away from policy making for the short-term towards long term initiatives for the common good.

PoMin believes that there is no longer debate about the impact carbon emissions have on climate change. Instead, discussion must move towards immediate action. The Stern Report and the Interim Report of Australia’s own Professor Garnaut make it clear that drastic action is required to prevent dangerous climate change. PoMin believes that nothing short of a global conversion to carbon independence is required.



Brave decisions need to be made now to manage the transition.

Australia, with its abundance of coal, has a special obligation to innovate and change. Having benefited enormously from resources that have polluted the environment, Australia must also take responsibility for transformation. If Australia can manage the transition from the carbon economy – including the impact on our profitable fossil fuel industry - then any nation can.

Principled, ethical Leadership: The Guiding principles.

PolMin calls on the Australian Government to be guided by the following principles of Catholic Social Teaching in developing Climate Change policy.

1. **Universal and Ecological Responsibility:** The solution to climate change requires a unified global plan. Australia, as it has done before in the development of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, must be a world leader. Further, as the earth's resources are limited and part of God's creation, Christians are called to use them with care and in a way that allows for regeneration and sustainability. Australia must be a steward of our precious ecology.
2. **The Common Good:** Public Investment in carbon free or clean technologies and renewable energy must be celebrated as a common good essential to our national and economic survival.
3. **Subsidiarity.** Choosing to support renewable energy and adopt climate friendly practices at business and home is best made and implemented at the local level. However, Government has an essential role resourcing and educating consumers to make intelligent, clean choices.

Australia's Universal Responsibility: Towards a global plan

"No country alone can solve the problems related to our common environment, we need to overcome self-interest through collective action."

- Intervention by the Holy See at *"The Future is in our hands: Addressing the Leadership Challenge of Climate Change"*
Address of Messenger Pietro Parolin, United Nations, New York Monday, 24 September 2007

PolMin recommends the Australian Government:

1. **Lead by example.** Australia will stimulate a global carbon economy by establishing its own carbon price and carbon trading scheme. Adherence to nationally adopted emission reduction target of 20-40% by 2020 will place increased pressure on other nations to do likewise.



2. ***Undertake ongoing diplomacy to develop a post-Kyoto agreement*** that includes developing nations and the United States. Australia must particularly leverage the US, India and China to support targets and timelines for carbon reduction. Such efforts must be ongoing, with Australia making diplomatic efforts outside of formal rounds of negotiation.
3. ***Take a proactive regional role*** supporting small Pacific nations facing the unique risks of dangerous climate change. Australia should take steps now to develop treaties and protocols for the safe rescue of climate refugees
4. ***Provide aid and assistance to(developing nations(countries) to help them prepare and adapt to climate change.***

Renewable Energy Investment: The national interest in a common good.

Australia is a natural resource goldmine. We have an abundance of fossil fuels – coal, iron-ore and uranium. We also have at our fingertips fields of sunshine and an endless coast of wind and waves. Our energy independence is not a case of “fossil fuel or bust”. We have other choices.

PolMin believes that the age of mining the ground for energy, with its consequent bio-hazards and carbon refuse, is coming to an end. Just as labour has been replaced by machine and steam gave way to diesel and electricity, fossil fuels will naturally be superseded by renewable energies.

Continuing to subsidise fossil fuel industries is counterproductive – it fails to face the realities of climate change. Instead investment must be directed to encouraging companies to change to clean energies and to subsidise renewable energy innovators.

Renewable energy innovation requires a prime mover, a company or group of entities prepared to take risks and invest time and capital in untried directions. Not unsurprisingly, bottom line private investors fear that the cost of starting up new industries outweighs waiting and capitalizing on other companies who make the first move (and the first mistake). To ensure there is not inertia, significant incentive needs to be given to innovators.

According to the Gaurnat Interim Report, since the privatization of energy industries, private sector investment in technological change has “fallen sharply to the point where it is under 0.4 per cent of turnover”. We cannot wait for private investors to catch up to the social consequences of climate change.

PolMin recommends the Australian Government:



1. **Support Renewable Energy Infrastructure Investment as the new “Snowy-Mountain” scheme.** Only by investing large amounts of public money towards the growth of renewable energies will ensure that they become viable, first choice producers of power solutions.
2. **Adopt a Renewable Energy Target of 25% by 2020**
3. **Drastically reduce all fossil fuel energy subsidies and tax breaks** and redirect same towards only clean or renewable energy providers.
4. **Allocate public lands for renewable energy experimentation.** Solar, Solar Thermal, Geo-thermal, Wind and Water power industries require large tracts of land and access to resources below and above ground. The Australian Government must develop policies on the use of public lands and resources for the development of renewable energies, with sensitivity to areas of environmental, heritage and indigenous cultural significance.
5. **Encourage householders and business to be energy self-sufficient** by utilizing their own land to install solar panels, wind turbines and small generation units.
6. **Acknowledge the role cars play in greenhouse pollution.** Fund public transport infrastructure. No Federal Government funding for improved freeways or highways should go ahead without a public transport solution embedded into the new road.

Managing Climate Change at home and work – a matter of consumer education.

“Consume less, live more”.

- anonymous graffiti

Many faiths, from Christianity to Buddhism have advocated simple living, discouraging overindulgence and excess as bad for the health of body, mind and spirit. During times of crisis, the human capacity for simple living helps us survive war, economic disaster and famine. But what does it mean to consume less in an abundant world?

The risk of Climate Change is forcing people in developed nations like Australia to consider what and how they use or waste finite resources. As consumption becomes a global, economic problem, the call to live more simply is gaining resonance.



Australia needs to go on a Carbon diet. It is embarrassingly well known that, per person, Australia emits the most carbon. The quick solution to our addiction is to consume less fossil fuel.

Weight control diets work best when people understand the *personal benefits* of a fit and healthy body and fail when they involve drastic denial of food. So it will be with a carbon diet. The Government needs to help educate Australian households and business consumers about how to change behaviour and make good choices – for themselves, the economy and the environment.

PolMin recommends the Australian Government:

1. **Undertake a National Climate Census.** Encourage all householders and businesses to audit their energy and water usage, the energy efficiency of their appliances and lights and travel activities. The information derived by the ABS will enable Government to develop best practice models for homes and businesses, recommend voluntary targets and create an effective education campaign.

Begin by auditing government buildings and planning to reduce their emissions impact.

2. **Set a Carbon Diet goal** – a National Energy Efficiency Target. Australia should be aiming toward a 1% electricity demand reduction by 2015.
3. **Award Government tenders and contracts only to companies and entities who supply Carbon Emission Reduction Plans and/or a Renewable Energy Use Plans.**
4. **Establish a National Climate Friendly Consumer register**, which lists products and services that are carbon friendly and energy efficient as well as opportunities for offsetting carbon emissions.

PolMin refers the Australian Government to *Greening Communities*, a new project involving Church Resources, a voluntary buying cooperative established to assist churches obtain affordable goods and services, Catholic Earthcare and Eco Community where Church and non-profit groups will be provided with:

- a. relevant knowledge and expertise to foster increased action in adopting environmentally friendly philosophies and product solutions.
- b. “best of breed” environmental product solutions and services through our partner suppliers.
- c. a regional Demand Register For Environmental Solutions, which assists church and not-for-profit organisations to aggregate demand in their local area.
- d. a useful central point of contact to facilitate best practice and cost-effective environmental solutions and initiatives for the church and not-for-profit sectors.



- e. independent assessors who will provide free advice and auditing to schools, health, aged care, welfare and parish facilities in order to help them decide the most appropriate approach and products for their own sites. Initially, this will focus on schools but we will systematically extend the program across all sectors.

5. Provide National Support for *EarthHour*.

Climate Change Adaptation for the disadvantaged

PolMin recognizes that the climate change will impact disproportionately on vulnerable and disadvantaged Australians. Elder people and small children will be vulnerable to heat waves, people in outer-suburban fringes will be vulnerable to bushfire and people on the land will face further financial difficulties associated with drought. For these reasons we must act to prevent dangerous climate change.

But at the same time, we must be mindful that initiatives to combat climate change do not further entrench disadvantage. Climate change adaptation must not become a burden to the nations poor and marginalized.

To this end, PolMin recommends the Australian Government:

1. Explore Healthcare card and other pensioner discounts and rebates for climate change related increases in basic utility costs.
2. Government increased amounts for subsidized water tank installation.
3. Incentives for low income earners to convert to solar and other renewable energies.



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Inquiries regarding this publication should be directed to
Tanja Kovac, National Coordinator,
Ph: 03 9728 2128
E: tkovac@polmin.com.au

