

Dear Professor Garnaut,

We acknowledge your inquiry into the effects of climate change on the Australian economy. The following is in response to your invitation for submissions to the Garnaut climate change review.

We are four Australian Citizens who are very concerned about the inaction of the Australian Government towards climate change. The Howard Government for the past decade took very little action and even denied the problem. As a result, Australia is currently lagging behind the world in it's responses to climate change, and we want to ensure that this legacy of inaction does not continue under the Rudd Government. We have been working collaboratively on a number of climate change programs and discussing the issues pertinent to Australia. The dangers of inaction on climate change have been well documented by the scientific community worldwide. The impacts of climate change are already being felt, and we are concerned that continued inaction by the Australian Government today will have severe ramifications in the years to come for our children and future generations.

We recognise your terms of reference within the Garnaut Review; however we feel that these terms of reference are somewhat limited, in that they do not address the extremely important issues of human rights and human security. This submission outlines our concerns by firstly discussing the science of climate change, which is followed by an analysis of the human rights and human security issues which arise as a result of climate change. The submission then moves on to a discussion of the policy recommendations needed for effective mitigation of climate change and highlights the policy measures the Australian government can take regarding carbon capture and storage of coal fire power stations and renewable energy. The submission then discusses the urgent political action needed for effective climate change mitigation and emphasizes the need to conceptualize and address climate change more broadly than the current economic paradigm to include at minimum, human rights and human security considerations.

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## SECTION 1: AN OUTLINE OF ENVIRONMENTAL & HUMAN RIGHTS AND SECURITY ISSUES.

### **The science of climate change**

Global atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide have increased markedly as a result of human activities to cause global warming (IPCC, 2007, p.2). In 2005, the carbon dioxide concentrations in the atmosphere far exceeded the natural levels over the last 650, 000 years being measured at 379ppm. Preceding 2005, levels were measured at a much lower 180 – 300 ppm (UNDP, 2007, p8-9). In addition to this, between the years of 1995 and 2006, 11 of those twelve years were ranked as being the warmest since 1850 as measured by the instrumental global surface temperature.

A vast range of scientific studies and reports have continued to prove to us the reality of climate change and the urgency with which Australia and the world must act in order to prevent irreversible damage from being done to our planet. There is broad scientific research proving increases in average global and ocean temperatures, extensive melting of snow and ice as well as a rising global sea level (IPCC, 2007, p.3). According to part 2, section 3 of the Stern report (2007), average global temperatures may rise by 2-3 degrees Celsius within the next 50 years. The Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation also predict that by 2070, there will be an increase in Australian temperatures by 1-6 °C. These predictions would be devastating for significant numbers of people and extensive areas of our globe.

### **Human rights & security issues:**

As cited in the Stern review, the following hazardous effects on the environment and our world's people are possible if Australia and both developed and developing countries do not act and temperatures rise to the suspected levels of 2-3°C over the next 50 years:

#### **1. Melting glaciers and rising sea levels**

Globally, freshwater supply problems due to climate change are most likely in developing countries with a high proportion of coastal lowland, arid and semi-arid coasts, coastal mega cities particularly in the Asia-Pacific region, and small island states, reflecting both natural and socio-economic factors that enhance the levels of risk (IPCC, 2007, p331). Flood risk will rise considerably during the wet season for 1/6 of the world's population, predominantly Northern China, the Indian sub-continent, and the Andes in South America (Stern, 2007, p56). Not only will these developing countries be at risk, but many developed cities and islands will be threatened by floods such as London, Miami, New York, Hong Kong, Mumbai and parts of South East Asia. With a temperature increase of 3-4°C, tens to hundreds of millions of people will be flooded each year as a result of rising sea levels. With the collapse of tropical glaciers, the Andean region will face definite water security threats (UNDP, 2007, p18).

## **2. Declining crop yields**

Rainfall, temperature and water availability for agriculture will all be affected by climate change (UNDP, 2007, p18). Anticipated land loss, soil salination and low water availability would be likely to threaten the sustainability of island agriculture and food security. Hundreds of millions of people, particularly in Africa, may lose the ability to produce or purchase sufficient food. Although some research has estimated that some crop yields may increase in rising temperatures such as 2-3°C, further warming will significantly decrease them (Stern, 2007, p56). In addition to natural and managed system impacts, the TAR also drew attention to projected human costs. These included an increase in the incidence of vector- and water-borne diseases in many tropical and sub-tropical islands, which was attributed partly to temperature and rainfall changes (IPCC Fourth Assessment report, 2007, p690).

## **3. Ecosystems transformation**

The rate of increase in air temperature in the Pacific during the 20<sup>th</sup> century exceeded the global average. The IPCC Third Assessment report (TAR) also found much of the rainfall variability appeared to be closely related to El Nino-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) events, combined with seasonal changes in the convergence zones (IPCC Fourth Assessment report, 2007, p690). Marine ecosystems will be majorly affected

with fish stocks possibly disrupted as well (Stern, 2007 p56). Alarmingly, ½ of the world's coral reef systems have suffered 'bleaching' due to warming seas (UNDP, 2007, p19). With a 3°C temperature increase, 20-30% of land species could face extinction (UNDP, 2007, p19).

#### **4. Permanently displaced people and deaths**

Two main climatic impacts on health at a regional scale emerge: direct heat related mortality and morbidity, and a climate-mediated change in the incidence of infectious diseases (Patz et. al., 2005, p315; Stern, 2007, p56). 200 million more people may be at risk of being displaced by the middle of the century due to increased floods, droughts and rising sea levels. Coastal communities, particularly in low income countries, are vulnerable to a range of health effects due to climate variability and long term climate change, particularly extreme weather and climate events such as cyclones, floods and droughts (IPCC Fourth Assessment report, 2007, p334).

*“The human consequences will be most serious and widespread in Sub-Saharan Africa, where millions more will die from malnutrition, diarrhoea, malaria and dengue fever... There will be acute risks all over the world from the Inuits in the Arctic to the inhabitants of small islands in the Caribbean and Pacific”* (Stern, 2007, p84).

With the amount of people predicted to be displaced by climate change, Australia and other developing countries would face extreme political and economic consequences. In short, if the Australian Government delays action on climate change in order to protect the economy, in the near future there may not be any economy to protect.

Although the poorest countries will be the *most* vulnerable to the effects of climate change, the economic effects and threat to human rights and security on Australia and developed countries will be vast. An alarming factor is that climate change is already responsible for the deaths of an estimated 150,000 people each year (World Health Organisation, as cited by Oxfam, 2007). Furthermore, even if drastic and immediate action were taken now, it is inevitable that there will be a temperature increase greater than 1°C (Oxfam, 2007, p3). This only reiterates the urgency with which all countries must act in order to halt the devastating effects of climate change which are already

overwhelming developing countries, and let us not forget that the developed nations are the main offenders in contributing to hazardous gases emissions.

**Emission cuts targets:**

The IPCC claims “with current climate change mitigation policies and related sustainable developmental practices, global green house gas emissions will continue to grow over the next few decades (high agreement, much evidence)” (2007, p4). Both Oxfam and the UNDP human development report summary (2007) indicate that in order to avoid hazardous climate change, the world’s ‘rich’ nations must adopt the goal of cutting emissions by at least 80 percent- 30% of which must be cut by 2020. Developing countries should have cuts of 20% by 2050. The annual cost of reaching these anticipated targets is 1.6% of global GDP- less than two thirds of global military spending. Clearly, this is an attainable target. As predicted in the Stern review, the UNDP states that if we do not act with efficiency and urgency, costs may well reach 5-20 percent of world GDP (p15).

**The Australian Government must adopt a broader focus than simply an economic focus.**

Australia has the resources along with an obligation both morally and ethically to provide assistance to other nations, particularly those in our region. This will be required as evident in a report titled “Climate Change Health Check 2020” amongst other publications. This report was prepared for The Climate Institute by Doctors for the environment Australia. The report was also endorsed by the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners and summarizes the latest research on climate and health.

The report says that improved health strategies would be required to reduce disastrous impacts of climate change – including a growing incidence of heat stress, heat related illness and trauma from extreme weather changes and infectious diseases. These impacts have been highlighted previously in our submission and this report is further confirmation that human health is ultimately dependent on the health of the planet.

The Climate Change Health Check Report reinforces the AMA's view that the Australian health system needs to be fully prepared for these impacts now.

In addition to this source a systematic review of studies of the El Nino-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) and malaria concluded that the impact of El Nino on the risk of malaria epidemics is well established in parts of southern Asia (IPCC Fourth Assessment report, 2007, p404). An assessment in Australia based on climatic suitability for the anopheline vectors projected a likely southward expansion of habitat. Although the future risk of endemicity would remain low due to the capacity to respond (IPCC Fourth Assessment report, 2007, p408). This is one major difference between small island countries of the Pacific who do not have the medical resources, which Australia has.

The TAR concluded that small islands could focus their efforts on enhancing their resilience and implement appropriate adaptation measures as urgent priorities (IPCC Fourth Assessment report, 2007, p690). Australia has the ability to assist these countries in need now, and must be prepared to do so in the future. The economic, social and environmental linkages between climate change and sustainable development, and their implications for poverty alleviation, have been highlighted in various studies (e.g., Hay et al., 2003; Huq and Reid, 2004) and these are highly relevant to small islands (IPCC Fourth Assessment report, 2007, p709).

Given the urgency for action in particular in regard to small island countries, Australia must take action now. The argument advanced by Hey et al. (2003), in the context of the Pacific small island states, who suggest that the most desirable adaptive responses are those that augment action which would be taken even in the absence of climate change, due to their contributions to sustainable development (IPCC Fourth Assessment report, 2007, p709).

Millions of people could face poverty, disease and hunger as a result of rising temperatures and changing rainfall expected to hit poor countries the hardest, as warned by the World Health Organization. Population vulnerability still greatly depends on economic and other determinants of a society's capacity to take measures against heat waves and outbreaks of infectious diseases. The regions with the greatest

burden of climate-sensitive diseases are also the regions with the lowest capacity to adapt to the new risks (Patz et. al., 2005, p315).

Global warming will significantly increase the amplitude of ENSO variability. The regions surrounding the Pacific and Indian Oceans are expected to be the most vulnerable to the associated changes in health risks (Paz et. al., 2005, p314). The World Health Organization have reported that in the Marshall Islands and South Pacific island nations, rising sea levels have already penetrated low-lying areas, submerging arable land and causing migrations to New Zealand or Australia.

There are many ways that climate change could affect coastal areas through an accelerated rise in sea level; a further rise in sea-surface temperatures; an intensification of tropical cyclones; changes in wave and storm surge characteristics; altered precipitation/runoff; and ocean acidification (IPCC Fourth Assessment report, 2007, p414).

With these dire outcomes predicted it is obvious that Australia needs to strengthen current systems of aid to provide clean water, immunizations, disease surveillance and mosquito control along with disaster preparedness.

## SECTION 2- Policy Recommendations

Australia must lessen it's reliance on coal-fired power stations, which are the greatest contributors to Australia's greenhouse gas emissions. Support for coal sequestration research and development must be abandoned, as it is a scientifically unproven technology. Furthermore, resources must be mobilised to develop renewable energy sources in Australia.

### **Recommendation 1: No more coal-fired power stations.**

- a. The greenhouse pollution created by burning coal is higher than for any other fossil fuel (Wilkenfield, 2007, p.6). Furthermore, The Australian Greenhouse Office has estimated that coal fired electricity generation was responsible for

one-third of all greenhouse gas emissions in Australia in 2005 (Australian Labor Party, 2008, p.1). We understand the importance and power of the coal industry within the Australian economy; however climate change is an issue which transcends all of these concerns. Now is the time for the Australian Labor party to put their fresh ideas into practice. The construction of new coal-fired power stations will lock-in Australia's current unacceptably high greenhouse gas emissions for many years to come. It is therefore essential that the construction of new-coal fired power stations, as well as other activities which will lock-in high emissions on a long term basis be ceased immediately.

**Recommendation 2: Debunking the 'Clean Coal' myth.**

- a. With limited international support for implementing unproven clean coal power stations, the Australian governments five hundred million dollar National Clean Coal Fund is unviable and the money would be better spent on proven renewable energy technologies which are already established. The Australian Greens Party senator, Christine Milne stated 'government funding for FutureGen and any other clean coal pipedreams should be withdrawn in favour of renewable technologies that are up and running now' (Wilkinson and Cubby, 2008, p.1). This issue is given added weight by the fact that the United States Government under the Bush administration recently ended its commitment to its one point eight billion US dollar clean coal experiment, citing massive budget blow-outs and a lack of progress. (Wilkinson and Cubby, 2008, p.1).
- b. Should coal sequestration ever become commercially viable, it must only be used to limit the emissions of current coal-fired power stations, not to justify the construction of further stations fuelled by coal. Furthermore, the funds to support this research and development should be funded by the coal industry itself rather than by taxpayers. If in the future it can be sufficiently proven that sequestration is a safe and viable option, which is cleaner than all other energy options available at the time or in the foreseeable future, it may be acceptable.
- c. Public money should not be going to subsidize the research of vastly wealthy coal companies; it should be going into renewable energy projects. There are

many uncertainties surrounding carbon capture and storage technology and as such, Australia should not be using this as a major policy response (Wilkinson and Cubby, 2008, p.1).

- d. The Australian Labor government has currently allocated a five hundred million dollar budget to a National Clean Coal Fund (Australian Labor Party, 2008, p.1). However pursuing Clean Coal Initiatives as a policy response to mitigating climate change is unviable, and the five hundred million dollar budget should be allocated towards the Australian Labor governments Renewable Energy Fund, in order to double the current commitment of five hundred million dollars (Australian Labor Party, 2008, p.1).

**Recommendation 3: Australia must direct it's energies to the research and development of efficient renewable energy sources, which will be viable on a large scale.**

- a. There must be further significant funding mobilised from the public and private sectors in order to expedite the development and implementation of successful and efficient renewable energy initiatives with the goal of wind power, photovoltaic energy, hydro power and pure solar-thermal energies being viable on a large scale. Australia is blessed with an abundance of renewable energy sources and is well positioned to become a major manufacturing and export centre in the renewable energy industry (Mallon, 2006, p.153). As such, it is in Australia's interest to develop these technologies as early as possible.
- b. The global market for clean and renewable energy is set to be worth seven hundred and fifty billion US dollars a year by 2016, therefore offering Australia significant economic opportunities in the future (Australian Labor Party, 2008, p.1). Australia is in an ideal position to take advantage of these economic incentives, and all that is required to make this happen is political will.
- c. It has been suggested that by 2040 it would be possible for thirty percent of Australia's electricity needs to be generated with natural gas, with a further

twenty-six percent generated by agricultural and forestry biomass, as well as twenty percent generated from wind energy (Denniss, Diesendorf & Saddler, 2004). Therefore it is reasonable to suggest that given that Australia is in a position to utilise renewable energies, and they, along with reductions in overall energy use will enable them to supply a significant amount of the base load required, the only reason why renewable energies are not being harnessed is due to a lack of research and development and a lack of political will by previous governments and private industries. Now is the time for that investment.

- d. It must also be noted that some so-called ‘renewable energies’ are sustained through environmentally destructive practices. For example, biomass energy derived from landfill is only sustainable so long as large-scale wasteful material use exists (Hamilton, Saddler & Wilkenfield, 2007, p.7). Such a process only serves to replace one contributor to greenhouse gas emissions with another and sustain the current level of wasteful consumerism present in Australian society which must be reduced. This issue must always be carefully considered before investing in any renewable energy source.

**Recommendation 4: Australia must accept political responsibility to mitigate the effects of climate change**

- a. It is well-known that the South Pacific Islands is predicted to be one of the regions to experience the worst effects of climate change. This is grossly unjust, considering that the quantity of greenhouse gasses emitted by these countries is minute when compared to that of the developed world (UNDP, 2008, p.18). This is further evidence of the fact that climate change is both a human security and an economic issue.
- b. Given Australia’s dominant role in the South Pacific, greater importance must be placed on assisting developing countries throughout the south pacific to cope with the effects of climate change, such as rising sea levels, through the Federal Government’s AusAid program (Sydee, 2004, p.2). Australia has an obligation under the Bali Action Plan to take into account ‘the urgent and

immediate needs of developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change, especially the least developed countries and small island developing States'. The Australian government took an important and long overdue policy decision in the signing of the Kyoto protocol; however the Australian government now needs to move decisively to deliver strong practical policy measures to mitigate climate change.

- c. The world's poor can not afford continuing complacency on climate change. Furthermore, they cannot afford the current large gap between what countries in the developed world portray in their climate change policies and what is actually done (UNDP, 2007, p.8).
  
- d. Australia is one of the highest producers of greenhouse gas per capita in the world. Therefore, Australia has a responsibility to mitigate the effects of climate change, as historically Australia's high level of greenhouse gas emissions, along with other developed nations is the major cause of climate change today. Australia and the rest of the developed world also have a greater capacity to finance the mitigation of climate change than the countries of the developing world (Oxfam, 2007, p.3).
  
- e. The Australian Government must continue its efforts to prevent deforestation in Indonesia, and throughout the developing world, as stipulated by the Bali Action Plan (UNFCCC, 2007). In Indonesia, for every one dollar which is generated from deforestation, a subsequent economic and environmental loss of between fifty and one hundred dollars occurs due to the reduced carbon capacity (UNDP, 2008, p.23). Australia has an obligation to protect the volume of green-house reducing rainforests, particularly those of its closest geographic neighbours.

Australia's current policy response timeframes to climate change fall far short of the urgency which is being promoted by the scientific evidence. Political inaction and delayed policy timeframes by the Australian

government heighten the risk of severe human rights and human security issues arising for the Australian nation, as the scientific evidence suggests. Australia's current policy timeframes are lacking urgency because of the Australian Government's emphasis of the economic impacts the introduction of climate change policy may have on the Australian economy, however the cost of delayed policy action now will have severe consequences for the Australian economy in the future. Climate change demands urgent action now to address a threat to two constituencies with a weak political voice: the world's poor and future generations.

**Recommendation 5: Australia must realign its policy response timeframes to climate change mitigation with the scientific evidence.**

- a. In March 2008, the Australian Minister for Climate Change, Penny Wong, announced that the Labor Party's scheme for an emissions trading scheme will not be in place until at least 2010. Similarly, the Australian Labor Government has promised to set a twenty percent renewable energy target to ensure that the equivalent of at least twenty percent of Australia's electricity supply or approximately sixty thousand gigawatt hours, is generated from renewable sources by 2020 (Australian Labor Party, 2008, p.2). This is an important election promise by the Australian government, of which it is vitally important to be transferred into strong practical policy responses, and placed firmly onto the Australian government's political agenda. The Rudd government promised new leadership and fresh ideas during the election, the authors of this submission hope the political rhetoric will be converted into new political leadership and initiative on mitigating climate change.
- b. Using plausible assumptions, it is estimated that avoiding dangerous climate change will require rich nations to cut emissions by at least 80 percent, with cuts of 30 percent by 2020 (UNDP, 2007, p.15).
- c. In order to achieve the scientific goals, radical and urgent political measures are required, to match the urgency of the current situation. Climate change was

a central platform of the Labor Party during the 2007 election campaign; however it appears that the issue has fallen off the political agenda, following the signing of the Kyoto Protocol. It must be acknowledged that no major domestic policies have been implemented since the signing of the Kyoto Protocol. This once again begs the question of whether the Rudd government's election promises of new leadership and fresh ideas, are being acted upon at the policy level to take new action and initiative on climate change.

**Recommendation 6: Australia must move away from viewing climate change through an economic paradigm.**

- a. The Australian government cannot continue seeking a purely market based solution to Climate Change. The Australian government's efforts to mitigate climate change cannot continue to be constrained by the effects climate change policy may have on the Australian economy. As the evidence shows that ignoring climate change will eventually damage economic growth (Stern Review, 2006, p.2). The human rights and human security issues which arise from climate change are therefore issues which need to be considered alongside economic considerations.
- b. Climate change presents a unique challenge for economics: it is the greatest and widest-ranging market failure ever seen. The economic analysis must therefore be global, deal with long time horizons, have the economics of risk and uncertainty at centre stage, and examine the possibility of major, non-marginal change (Stern Review, 2006, p.1). Liberalization and privatization policies to develop free energy markets aim to provide greater competition and lower consumer prices but have not always been successful in this regard, often resulting in a lack of capital investment and scant regard for environmental impacts (IPCC, 2007, p.23).
- c. Our actions over the coming few decades could create risks of major disruption to economic and social activity, later in this century and in the next, on a scale similar to those associated with the great wars and the economic depression of the first half of the 20th century. And it will be difficult or impossible to reverse these changes. Tackling climate change is the pro-

growth strategy for the longer term, and it can be done in a way that does not cap the aspirations for growth of rich or poor countries. The earlier effective action is taken, the less costly it will be (Stern Review, 2006, p.2).

- d. The annual costs of stabilization at 500-550ppm CO<sub>2</sub>e to be around 1% of GDP by 2050 - a level that is significant but manageable. Reversing the historical trend in emissions growth, and achieving cuts of 25% or more against today's levels is a major challenge. Costs will be incurred as the world shifts from a high-carbon to a low-carbon trajectory. But there will also be business opportunities as the markets for low-carbon, high-efficiency goods and services expand (Stern Review, 2006, p.12).
- e. Our stabilization target is stringent but affordable. Between now and 2030, the average annual cost would amount to 1.6 percent of GDP. This is not an insignificant investment. But it represents less than two-thirds of global military spending. The costs of inaction could be much higher. According to the Stern Review, they could reach 5–20 percent of world GDP, depending upon how costs are measured (UNDP, 2007, p.15).
- f. The Australian government recently announced that thirty-one billion dollars in tax cuts would be delivered to the Australian people. The Australian government needs to re-direct some of the thirty-one billion dollars in tax cuts, as needed to fund major investment into renewable energy sources. This investment into renewable energy sources will reduce the risk of damage to the Australian economy which the human rights and human security impacts of inaction on climate change would cause. Re-directing the thirty-one billion dollars in tax cuts towards investment in renewable energy sources will also be good short-term for the Australian economy as delivering tax cuts directly to the Australian people may encourage consumer spending and further push up already high inflation levels.

### SECTION 3- CONCLUDING REMARKS

It is Australia's responsibility to its people and other countries, both developing and developed, to combat climate change in an efficient and practical way to protect human rights and security. There is vast potential for both economic expansion and a healthier, safer world with reduced carbon emissions. It would be shameful for Australia to let its own people suffer the ill effects of climate change, and to hinder poor countries and even reverse their development as a result of failing to act with efficiency.

The submission has highlighted the urgent need for the Australian government to move to abolish the construction of new, and development and research into coal fired power stations effective immediately. Carbon capture and storage or coal sequestration needs to be only implemented for existing power stations with a policy of long term phase out. Finally the Australian government needs to inject major funding into research and development and construction of renewable energy sources as the major policy response to mitigating climate change in the energy sector. The authors of the submission acknowledge that there are many other pertinent issues surrounding climate change policy in Australia; however we argue that the recommendations regarding Australia's energy sector are the most important and require an urgent policy response by the Australian government.

Through this submission, we have shown that climate change must be approached with both an economic and human rights and human security viewpoint. The Labor Party made a promise during the 2007 election campaign of 'new leadership and fresh ideas', however the current policy response to climate change is encompassing the same stale economic underpinnings and political procrastination as it's predecessors, which is endangering the Australian people and the global population, both at present and in the future.

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