

11 April 2008

## **Submission to the Garnaut Climate Change Review**

I am a retired conservation biologist and still do independent bird research and volunteer my time, knowledge and skills in community landcare and conservation projects. I live in a rural community where the main economic activities are agriculture, forestry and tourism.

I am deeply concerned about the present and future impact of climate change on the function of global and regional ecosystems. Scientists predict that increases in global temperature above 2 degrees will accelerate species extinction (e.g. in high altitude iconic regions such as the Wet Tropics and in the World Heritage Great Barrier Reef) and will disrupt ecosystem function and the delivery of ecosystem services such as pollination, natural pest control, water purification and nutrient recycling.

I strongly urge you to recommend that Australia set strong, science-based targets to reduce human-induced greenhouse pollution by at least 30 per cent by 2020 and 60-80 per cent by 2050. The melting of polar ice shelves, the melting of glaciers in the Andes, Himalaya and in Africa, the acidification and warming of oceans, rising sea levels and storm surges, and the increased threat of wildfire and cyclones can no longer be denied.

Economic signals and policy play a pivotal role for Government, business and consumers to reduce greenhouse pollution by 2020 and avoid dangerous climate change. Action to reduce greenhouse pollution is too important to leave to Government and business. Every person has a responsibility to make a positive contribution. A carbon trading system for business needs to have a cap set by climate scientists. Companies must buy permits. I strongly advocate that all individual consumers have a free fixed tradable quota. Reducing demand for energy especially that from coal and reducing demand for petroleum fuels is vital. Individuals need economic incentives such as a tradable carbon quota to reduce consumption and sell their surplus 'energy' to individuals with more extravagant lifestyles. Carbon taxes could be paid on all air travel and for any consumer goods such as fuel-inefficient luxury vehicles and inefficient appliances that don't meet 'greenhouse standards'.

The value of carbon offsets in reducing greenhouse pollution should be investigated. Carbon offset schemes can play a very important role providing they invest in permanent native vegetation that soaks up and stores carbon as well as increases habitat for biodiversity conservation. Carbon offset schemes that invest in short-term plantations provide little biodiversity benefit.

I urge you to recommend that Australia move swiftly to a low-carbon economy. A strong 2020 target to reduce greenhouse pollution can be achieved by a massive increase in Government and business investment in renewable technologies such as solar, reduced subsidies to the petroleum and aluminium industries, massive increase in public transport infrastructure, no building of new coal-fired power stations, smarter ways of providing water to consumers than building desalinization plants, greater efficiencies in building design through regulation and much more.

All these positive initiatives will provide new jobs in the manufacturing and service industries and provide opportunities for generations of children to grow up in a cleaner, safer world. In addition any initiatives that reduce greenhouse pollution will give hope to many non-human inhabitants of the earth facing the threat of extinction.

I urge you to recommend economic solutions to reducing greenhouse pollution from land-use changes caused by agriculture and forestry. High conservation value old-growth forests store hundreds of tonnes of carbon yet they continue to be clearfelled and burnt especially in my home State of Tasmania. The forest industry should be paying carbon taxes for this pollution and for any clearance of native vegetation. One incentive for preventing clearance of native vegetation on private land and restore permanent native vegetation for biodiversity is to provide carbon credits to land managers and owners.

A 30 per cent reduction in greenhouse pollution by 2020 is achievable and affordable at a cost of just 80 cents a day for each Australian. That's a small price to pay for a better safer, cleaner future for humanity and global biodiversity.

Sincerely,

Dr Richard Donaghey  
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