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To Garnaut Review Secretariat,

Please find enclosed a submission entitled 'What the science is telling us and the role Australia can play in developing a sustainable future' for the Garnaut Climate Change review. This submission is a response to Issues Paper 3 – Climate Change, as found on the relevant website. This submission is being made by Resistance Newcastle, a branch of the national groups Resistance and Socialist Alliance, all of whom have a well-established interest and involvement in the national debate concerning climate change.

This submission addresses the questions raised by Issues Paper 3 – Climate Change; primarily analysing contemporary scientific perspectives and investigating whether or not there is a need for new emission scenarios. It also contains a series of recommendations for the review – ways that Resistance Newcastle believes positive change can be achieved in Australia and around the world. However, it is also the aim of Resistance to build a social movement, through education and involvement, capable of counterbalancing the large number of primarily economic interest groups within the national context.

Resistance Newcastle would greatly appreciate any information regarding any consideration of this submission by the Garnaut Climate Change Review.

Sincerely yours,

Mitchell Meek.
Resistance Newcastle.

CLIMATE CHANGE:

**WHAT THE SCIENCE IS TELLING US AND
THE ROLE AUSTRALIA CAN PLAY IN
DEVELOPING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE**

**Submission to the
Garnaut Climate Change Review**

**Written on behalf of Resistance Newcastle by
Mitchell Meek**

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This submission is a response by Resistance Newcastle to the call for submissions made by the Garnaut Climate Change Review and to Issues Paper 3 – Climate Change (Garnaut Climate Change Review, 2008). It is also a response to increasing levels of public awareness of and concern regarding the issue of climate change and sustainability.

It is the position of Resistance Newcastle that Australia has not only a huge responsibility to lead the way in the fight against change, but great potential to have some real and very positive impacts. As a leading exporter of coal and a country which was once hailed as a being world leader in sustainable development, it is time for the Australian Government and its people to take drastic action to ensure that the destruction of the planet's delicate balance is ended.

In answer to the questions raised by the Issues Paper (Garnaut Climate Change Review, 2008) and the scenarios discussed by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2000), Resistance Newcastle has the following recommendations, and believes that they are a blueprint for moving Australia into the 21st century and building a sustainable and environmentally friendly future.

- Set emission reduction targets that will achieve real results (a 60% reduction on 1990 levels by 2020 and a 90% reduction by 2030)
- Build from the ratification of the Kyoto protocol by initiating more international binding agreements to combat climate change and set realistic goals
- Aim for a zero-waste economy, focusing on industries which may have a high contribution to emissions
- Set new energy efficiency requirements for all new buildings (which would include the subsidising of solar energy and hot water systems) by introducing an energy efficiency star rating system
- Bring all power industries under public ownership and initiate a total shift towards renewable resources (which would include the retraining of current industry workers to ensure job security and strength in the economy)

- Utilise the Automotive industry by instigating vehicle buy back and conversion schemes that would see polluting vehicles off the roads and a greener transport system
- Initiate the construction of wind farms and continue research into other sustainable energy sources, including geothermal, concentrating solar thermal, wave and tidal generation and waste biomass fuel
- Ensure a move towards organic farming
- Initiate urgent reforestation so the environment can combat the negative effects of global warming naturally
- Revitalise national public transport, ensuring a move towards cleaner transportation through the use of environmentally friendly fuels.

2. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the environment has forced its way onto the political landscape in ways that have not been seen in years gone past. Issues revolving around global warming and the quest for sustainable energy now dominate environmental discourse. Resistance is a youth organisation which has been actively involved in social issues for a number of years, and the Newcastle branch is no exception.

Operating as an affiliate group linked to the Socialist Alliance (Socialist Alliance, 2006) and branch of the nation wide socialist organisation Resistance – Resistance Newcastle advocates a number of causes and is involved with a number of injustices that it sees in the community, including (but not limited to); sexism, racism, discrimination of any kind, and environmental destruction. Resistance aims to encourage individuals, communities and the nation to adopt practices which prevent and nullify the effects of climate change, and to build a social movement strong enough to be a counterbalance to the corporate interests that play an increasingly large role in determining government policy. The purpose of this submission is to put these objectives into action, and to instigate drastic social changes which can help Australia move into the future in a far greener and more sustainable fashion.

This submission is a direct response to ‘Issues Paper 3 – Climate Change’ as published by the Garnaut Climate Change Review (Garnaut Climate Change Review, 2008), and will investigate some of the scientific evidence regarding climate change and what needs to be done in order to protect the environment and counteract the large number of negative influences that industry and other activities are having on the global climate. This is an international issue; however, Australia has a responsibility as a leading contributor to global warming to make drastic changes in order to ensure a greener tomorrow. Hence, the report will look also specifically at what Australia can do to confront this issue.

3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.1 Climate Change and Australia: a brief history

Climate change and the issue of sustainability has gained an increasing prominence in the media recently, to the point that it was one of the major issues which decided the 2007 Federal election. While this would lead some to believe that climate change is a new issue, it is important to understand that it has been in the political spotlight for many years. The Office of National Assessment (ONA) first brought climate change to the attention of the Australian Government in 1981, when it published a report outlining the problem and the likely consequences (Hamilton, 2007, p.44). However, the ONA's report was largely ignored, and little action was taken following its submission. 1983 however, marked an increase of Australia Government engagement with the issue of global warming and saw the Hawke Government heralded as a world leader in battling climate change and initiating sustainable development. Unfortunately, this imperative was lost during the early 1990s when Hawke was succeeded by Paul Keating, and the focus of the federal Government moved away from the environment. This trend continued and worsened through the years of the Howard Prime Ministership (Hamilton, 2007, p.158), which demonstrates the downward slide that Australia has been in when it comes to active involvement with this issue.

The Howard Government was repeatedly criticised throughout its tenure for failing to ratify the Kyoto Protocol and join a significant international effort to combat climate change and embrace sustainability. The reasons for not signing the protocol seem to lie at the very core of the uncomfortable nexus where environmental and economic concerns meet – to meet the targets set by the protocol would be unacceptable in terms of the international economic implications (Australian Associated Press, 2004). There were also concerns that the targets set were unacceptable in terms of achieving the goals they were directed towards (Australian Associated Press, 2004). However, the Rudd Government ratified the Kyoto Protocol as one of its first acts in government (Australian Associated Press, 2007), which brings into question the motivations for refusing to sign previously.

As is always true with areas of public policy, community involvement and activism plays a crucial role in initiating change and progress. Resistance is just one group which has had a high level of involvement with the issue of global warming for a long time, becoming more and more active as the issue moved further into the sphere of public concern. During the 2007 Federal election, it helped to organise the ‘Walk Against Warming’ campaign, encouraging members to ‘vote with their feet’ and put the issue of climate change at the forefront of political debate (Resistance, 2007). Even more recently, Resistance took part in a meeting of environmental interest groups in Melbourne to address the increasingly important issue of climate change. The aim was to unify and connect all the individual climate change groups together and form a single climate change movement, one that has more power and will be more able to effectively address the issue (Bolton, 2008, p.4).

This country has had a long involvement with the issue of climate change and is in a position to lead efforts to save the environment. With regards to the conflict between economic and environmental concerns, it is time to realise that economic concerns pale in comparison to the likely environmental impacts unless action is taken immediately. It is time for Australia to take action on a national and international scale, and the ratification of the Kyoto protocol and the organisation of interest groups is an important step to achieving this goal.

3.2 What is the science telling us?

One of the major difficulties in recent years has been the level of division within the scientific community regarding the extent of the damage being caused by global warming, and indeed, if global warming is occurring at all. However, this gap in scientific opinion is narrowing, and there is now much more consensus regarding climate change and the need for sustainability.

Climate change scientists have been able to reach a number of conclusions regarding the future impacts of continued global warming and the effects that are being felt even now (Garnaut Climate Change Review, 2008). Featured below is a table which details

some of the most alarming of the likely consequences of continued high levels of harmful emissions, as they relate to water; ecosystems; food production; coastal systems; industry, settlement and society; and general health.

Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Runoff increases at high latitudes and some wet tropics, decrease over much of mid latitudes (>80% confidence) • Increased drought affected areas. Augmented flood risk (80%) • Water volumes in glaciers to decline (>80%)
Ecosystems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of resilience of many ecosystems (>80%) • Net source of carbon (>80%) • 20-30% of species are at high risk of extinction if >1.5-2.5°C rise (>50%) • Changed structure (>80%)
Food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased crop yield at high latitudes (>50%) • Decreased crop yield at lower latitudes - increased hunger (>50%) • Lower local production especially in subsistence sectors at low latitudes (>80%)
Coastal systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exposed coastlines (>90%) • Major decline in corals, salt marshes and mangroves (>90%) • Hundreds of millions of people vulnerable to flooding, especially in mega delta and small island regions (>90%)
Industry, settlement and society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will vary widely - in aggregate the net effect is negative (>80%) • Those populations most vulnerable are in coastal and river flood plains, linked to climate-sensitive resources, exposed to extreme weather events (>80%) • Poor communities most vulnerable (>80%)
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likely to affect millions of people, particularly with low adaptive capacity, through malnutrition, increased deaths, disease and injury (fire, floods, storms, droughts, water-related disease) (>80%) • Mixed effects such as expansion and contraction of malaria range (>80%) • Some benefits through lower cold exposure

Source: Garnaut Climate Change Review, 2008; IPCC, 2007a.

As is demonstrated, the consequences of a continuation of current trends are severe. This is why scientists world wide are calling for immediate action to be taken. The

current high emissions of harmful pollutants is upsetting the Earth's energy balance (Hansen, 2003; Clarke, 2008b), which is currently in a state of flux, rapidly approaching various tipping points which will result in an overall increase of the effects we are witnessing today (Hansen, Sato, Ruedy, Lacis and Oinas, 2000; Hansen, 2003; Clarke, 2008b). There is also consensus on what needs to be done in order to directly combat the problem – a shift away from the global emphasis on fossil fuels and non-renewable, unsustainable energy sources (Hansen et al., 2000). Carbon dioxide is a key contributor to global warming, and its primary source is the burning of fossil fuels (Garnaut Climate Change Review, 2008).

In terms of the global community, there is now a good deal of scientific data detailing what effects climate change is having. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) ascertains that while 5% of global temperature increases can be accounted for by natural variation, 90% of these increases can be directly attributed to higher levels of concentration of greenhouse gases in the Earth's atmosphere (including carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide) (Garnaut Climate Change Review, 2008).

With regards to the Australian context, according to the Garnaut Climate Change Review (2008), there is little doubt that there will be a continuing trend of rising temperatures in Australia and in Australian waters if harmful emissions are not arrested. Levels of rainfall have been steadily decreasing since 1940, and significant fears are held for the future biodiversity of the Great Barrier Reef and the Queensland wet Tropics in particular (Garnaut Climate Change review, 2008). This is not altogether surprising however, considering that Australia is ranked fifth amongst the top nine emitters in the world, who are responsible for roughly 60% of all harmful greenhouse gases (Parker and Blodgett, 2005).

Lastly, it has recently been determined that current levels of harmful carbon dioxide in the atmosphere are at 650 000 year highs, 2005 being the point when levels peaked (IPCC, 2007b). In addition to this, the past and present emissions will stay within the atmosphere and have a significant impact on the global energy cycle for at least the next 1000 years (IPCC, 2007b). What this means is that the amount of harmful pollution which has and is taking place will be negatively impacting on the planet for

the next millennium. Hence, action needs to be taken immediately so as to limit the amount of time before the planet's environmental stability can be restored.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 The position of Resistance Newcastle

To quote the aforementioned climate change scientist James Hansen: "business-as-usual would be a guarantee of global and regional disasters." (Environmental News Service, 2007). It is the position of Resistance that major changes need to be made to the social and economic systems that we live in to facilitate effective strategies for dealing with climate change (Hughes and Harris, 2008). The most fundamental of these changes are featured in section 6; Recommendations, and taken directly from the Climate Change Charter that Resistance adheres to (Socialist Alliance, 2007). Put simply, the changes involve a redistribution of our energy industry to focus primarily on sustainable resources, a restructuring of public infrastructure to make it easy for individuals and communities to be act in climate friendly ways, and strict but effective emission reduction targets which will see actual results.

Resistance Newcastle has a strong understanding of what these changes will actually mean. Australia is a major exporter of coal throughout the world, and Newcastle and the Hunter Region has a long history of involvement with the coal industry. However, the need for drastic changes to halt global warming must take place soon and they must be effective. Australia is a world leader in many fields, and it is time that it becomes a world leader in terms of the role it plays in combating climate change.

4.2 The role Australia can play

Australia has the potential to play an extremely influential role in the fight against climate change. Section 6 of this report, Recommendations, outlines a number of steps that this nation can take to become a world leader, in the form of a ten point action plan. These ten points, along with the following brief summary, are taken from the Socialist Alliance Climate Change Charter (Socialist Alliance, 2007). It involves a complete renovation of the energy (and in particular, coal) industries, placing the emphasis on renewable energy sources and reducing harmful emissions. Ensuring that

all new developments and constructions are carbon neutral and do not harm the environment is one of the most logical steps that we can take, which also allows us to concentrate on addressing current emission contributors without creating more. A redesign of public transport is also a key initiative, shifting as much travel as possible to public transport and reducing the reliance of air travel are both ways that emissions can be significantly decreased. In addition to this, it proposes the restructuring of farming practices to be more ecologically sustainable and less reliant upon fossil fuels.

Unsurprisingly, one of the major roles Australia can play is to stop using coal as a fuel source for Australian energy, and to withdraw from the international coal mining and exporting industry. Coal burning accounts for 36% of Australia's climate change causing emissions (Socialist Alliance, 2007), and through the export of coal, Australia is implicitly responsible for pollution around the world when its coal is burnt elsewhere. In order to effectively combat climate change, it is necessary to make a drastic move away from the coal mining industry. This would also necessitate the creation of new jobs for miners (a sustainable industry actually strengthening the economy through the creation of more jobs than the current industry supports) and a new strategy for underdeveloped countries to implement renewable sources of energy. Clean coal is also not a completely viable alternative, scientists expressing concern for the pollution which will be caused during the construction of such systems, and for the fact that the system could not be implemented in time to arrest current trends. In addition to this, while there are some varieties which give off smaller amounts of harmful pollutants, coal still contributes more to greenhouse gas emissions than any other fossil fuel when burnt (Wilkenfield, Hamilton and Saddler, 2007, p.2). In short, coal cannot be a part of the solution. And, many argue, nuclear power cannot be either. Despite claims that nuclear power is a clean way for Australia to meet its energy needs, the pitfalls of such a power source are obvious. Australia needs to withdraw from the global nuclear cycle for a number of reasons, primarily that the amount of time that it would take to shift to nuclear power would be catastrophic for the environment, the emissions that would be created during the construction process would negate any possible benefits, storage of nuclear waste is still an unsolvable problem, as well as a number of issues pertaining to Aboriginal land rights. To quote the former Foreign Minister Alexander Downer: "as the holder of the world's largest

uranium reserves, we have a responsibility to supply clean energy to other countries” (Downer, 2006). We do indeed have a duty to provide clean sources of energy to other countries; however, nuclear energy is not the way to do so.

In summary, Australia has the capacity to play a very large role in the future climate friendly directions of the international community, if it prepared to act as a leader. Internationally, Australian needs to take drastic steps to reduce emissions so that developing countries who also make high contributions (such as China and India) will be encouraged to do the same (Clarke, 2008a). The nation needs to embrace sustainable energy sources (similar to the ways that Spain and Denmark have, both of whom get more than 20% of their energy from wind and solar sources) (Socialist Alliance, 2007) and move away from its affiliation with coal as an industry and as an export, before we reach dangerous tipping points and climate change and related damage accelerates (Hansen et al., 2000, Hansen, 2003).

4.3 Is there a need for a new emissions scenario?

Upon investigating the scientific perspectives and a good deal of evidence, yes and no. While it is obvious that it is unlikely that a single path for emissions will emerge from one of the proposed scenarios (IPCC, 2000, p.3), they are useful in predicting the future outcomes of current actions, and hence, should guide the direction of governments around the world. The scenarios outlined by the IPCC (2001) analyse how driving forces (such as the economy) will impact overall emission levels when elements of them are changed (IPCC, 2000, p.3). An example of such a change is the Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS), set to be implemented in Australia by 2010, whereby industries and groups are given permits which cut their emission levels and are encouraged to trade in order to make the whole system economically viable as well as environmentally sound (Australian Government Department of Climate Change, 2008). Currently, there are around 40 scenarios which can be defined as belonging to one of two ‘families’. The first family is categorised by a lack of explicit policy for reducing emissions, while the second is categorised by a focus on such policy (CSIRO, 2006). The difference between different scenarios lies in small changes to variable factors, such as economic and social development (CSIRO, 2006).

Scenarios act as blueprints for possible future action, giving policy makers an idea of where their policy might lead. Given that there are a good deal of scenarios which focus on environmental impacts under the condition of emission reducing policies, the question of whether or not there is a need for new emissions scenarios can be answered with an emphatic 'no'.

However, there are some concerns that they may not be as economically sound as first thought. It appears that the methodology used for predicting economic progression in less developed countries may be exaggerated due to conversion of GDP (Gross Domestic Product) to foreign exchange rates (Castles and Henderson, 2003, p.159). The effect of this is that some scenarios may appear to be favourable because they enable a strong global economic system, however, the closing of the gap between rich and poor is quite possibly exaggerated, and economic gains warped. It is because of this that this report suggests there may be some need for new scenarios which address the shortcoming identified by Castles and Henderson (2003, p.159). There is also the issue proposed by Professor Peter Sheehan of 'the New Global Growth Path' (Garnaut Climate Change Review, 2008), which refers to an extended period of growth which has been occurring in the global economy (particularly in China, India and former Soviet States). In China particularly, the growth has been remarkably strong, sitting at around 10% p.a. since joining the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in 2001, which has in turn increased energy needs and the severity environmental problems. Most of this growth is driven by industry (Garnaut Climate Change Review, 2008) which has meant that the unprecedented growth of global economies has been mirrored by environmentally destructive practices. However, it is important not to overstate the impact that these developing nations are having – it is still the more industrialised nations such as Australia and the USA whom are having the greatest impact (Ross, 1991). The main concern however, is that unless such growth is met with effective strategies for reducing emissions, then there is little hope of keeping the global temperature from rising 2°C and reaching dangerous tipping points (Garnaut Climate Change Review, 2008; Socialist Alliance, 2007).

With respect to emission scenarios, the new global growth path is not adequately accounted for, which, combined with the previously highlighted weaknesses (as outlined by Castles and Henderson, (2003)), means that the existing scenarios need a

good deal of revision. Resistance Newcastle agrees that there needs to be some modifications made to existing scenarios, with a mind to encourage governments world wide (and in Australia) to take action immediately.

5. CONCLUSION

This report is an analysis of scientific information and contemporary schools of thought with regards to climate change and is an attempt to answer the question of emission scenarios. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change will be meeting throughout 2008 with the aim of addressing this issue, as the need to combat climate change becomes more and more real.

In response to the question of emission scenarios, Resistance Newcastle is of the opinion that there is no need for a complete redesign of the proposed scenarios, however, slight changes will no doubt be beneficial in determining the most effective path to reduce emissions, which will serve to give a destination for climate change policy around the world to aim for. Resistance Newcastle believes that the inclusion of a number of direct initiatives would be instrumental in ensuring a positive future in terms of climate change, and these initiatives are outlined in Section 6, 'Recommendations'. It is the position of Resistance Newcastle therefore, that the most accurate and positive scenario will be based on an environment which encompasses the recommendations to follow.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Resistance, and its parent organisation, the Socialist Alliance, operate according to a climate change charter that they have developed with the future of Australia's social fabric and the economy firmly in mind. The Socialist Alliance Climate Change Charter (Socialist Alliance, 2007) contains a ten point action plan for dealing with Climate Change in an effective and positive manner. The following recommendations are (in part) taken from this action plan and reflect the overall goal of Resistance as outlined at the beginning of this submission: to encourage individuals, communities and the nation to act in ways that prevent and nullify the effects of climate change and to build a social movement strong enough to be a counterbalance to the corporate interests that are currently determining government policy. Resistance Newcastle feels that in response to the aforementioned need for a new scenario, it is necessary that these points be included in determining an effective future direction.

- **Set emission targets that will achieve real results:** the need to set reduction targets which actually result in the cessation and eventual reversal of global warming trends is fundamental to effective and positive environmental policy. A 60% reduction by 2020 and a 90% reduction by 2030 will ensure that Australia is moving in the right direction to eliminate its contribution to this global problem.
- **Ratify the Kyoto Treaty and initiate further collective international action:** while the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol was a definite step into a greener future, it is now necessary for Australia to take the lead and initiate new, stronger, binding treaties with highly industrialised nations to ensure that global emissions are cut to the levels previously mentioned. This step would also involve providing underdeveloped countries with non-polluting materials for industrial and social development.
- **Aim for a zero-waste economy, focusing on industries which make a high contribution to emissions:** the Tomago aluminium smelter for instance, uses enormous quantities of energy. This smelter could be used much less intensively

to produce aluminium for essential needs only, where no alternative material (such as steel, concrete or timber) is available to replace aluminium.

- **Set new energy efficiency requirements for all new buildings:** this would involve the subsidising of solar energy panels for energy and hot water systems, as well as imposing tough regulations for commercial industries. Aiming for a national-wide 10-star energy efficiency rating, set a target of a 6-star rating in two years for businesses and industries, and a 10-star rating in 10 years.
- **Bring all power industries under public ownership and initiate a total shift towards renewable resources:** bring the coal mining industry into public ownership and use coal export revenues to build up alternative export industries (especially renewables) to allow mining to be rapidly phased out. These measures would of course call for the retraining of current industry workers.
- **Utilise the Automotive industry:** initiative buyback and conversion schemes to ensure electric cars on the roads and the effective recycling of unneeded vehicles. Use the automotive industry into the public domain and use it to improve public transport (increase availability and make it more energy efficient). The industry can also be reequipped to manufacture tools for the societal conversion to sustainable resources. i.e. winds turbines, solar water heating systems etc. All subsidies to the mining industry (which currently receives around \$8Billion per year in subsidies) should be removed and these funds should instead be invested into establishing alternative sources of jobs and export revenue as rapidly as possible. This needs to happen in mining and non-mining areas alike, but should specifically target mining communities such as Scone and Muswellbrook to allow a transition out of mining and into other quality jobs.
- **Initiate the construction of wind farms:** while researching further sustainable energy sources, including geothermal, concentrating solar thermal, wave and tidal generation and waste biomass fuel, construct wind farms as a means of providing energy for power grids with the goals of efficiency and sustainability.

- **Ensure a move towards organic farming:** this would involve a shift away from using fossil fuels and fossil fuel based pesticides and fertilisers. The focus needs to be on the prolonged development and regeneration of indigenous ecosystems, while guaranteeing food security and the continued prosperity of the farming industry.
- **Initiate urgent reforestation:** the logging of old growth forests needs to come to an end as a vital step in the battle against climate change, allowing the planet to combat global warming in a natural fashion.
- **Revitalise national public transport:** as a major step in the fight against climate change, public transport needs to be strengthened and largely redesigned. The focus needs to be on trains and rail as a means on national transportation, with buses converted and ferries converted to biofuel (derived from waste) and electric engines. The reliance on air travel to move around the country should be targeted and reduced, and personal use of bicycles should be encouraged.
- **Stop the massive expansion of coal mining and exports currently underway in Australia:** all new coal mines (including those such as Anvil Hill which have been recently approved but are not yet operating) should be banned. Port infrastructure aimed at boosting exports such as new coal loaders (again, including approved but incomplete infrastructure such as the third coal loader at Kooragang) should also be banned.

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