

Submission to Garnaut Climate Change Review

**Response to Issues paper:  
Climate Change: Land use – Agriculture and Forestry**

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James A Campbell

Newtown NSW

## Submission

I wish to provide a short submission as a private citizen with an interest in the pressing challenge of climate change locally and globally.

### Responsibility and equity

I am concerned about the impacts of the significant climate change and global warming already predicted by the scientist reporting through the UN IPCC. These impacts represent a crisis for humanity (and many other species) across the globe and across generations; impacts that will be most heavily experienced by the most socially vulnerable, but that are primarily caused by as a result of energy use of the most affluent. Australia has a particular responsibility to lead action as a nation of affluence, with amongst the highest emissions of greenhouse gasses, but which also has a particular geography which will feel these climate change very early.

### Urgency and leadership

I urge the Review most of all to generate a sense of urgency for action – action that the IPCC and reports such as that by Stern suggest needs to start strongly in the shortest possible time frame – to turn around our position in the next 5 years and in this process lead action across the globe. It is only by demonstrating our intent by our actions and participating in global action that we engage the principle of ‘equity’ urgently needed to get all nations dealing with the challenge together.

### Scale of change

The urgency of our actions will need to be matched by the scale of our reductions. A way will need to be found technically and politically to reduce the level of our emissions at a much greater level than that currently discussed generally in the polity. A growing body of reputable opinion is now suggesting short to medium term reduction targets in the range of 70%-90%

## Agriculture and forestry

### Sector analysis and change

I support the Review’s decision to deal with the issues on a sector by sector basis. The technical issues are sector specific and the scientific and policy responses need to be sector based. The vital job of measurement can only be dealt with on a sector level. The advantage of finding the best possible solutions at a sector level is that it has the potential to make change politically possible, where untested wider changes may not be able to be introduced. This also has the advantage of testing what will need to be radical policy in a way that is not possible or sensible across several sectors.

### Separate measurement

There are obvious reasons to link forestry and agriculture use, but policy responses to land clearing, forestry and other agriculture should be de-coupled and the measurement of the impacts of each need to be separated. In particular the cessation of mass land clearing should be ‘counted’ clearly and separately when considering the overall level of emissions produced by Australia and in what might contribute to meeting targets for international climate agreements.

Carbon sinks in the form of vegetation has limits in its use to deal with long term climate change, but it has value as a short term solution to buy time for other sustainable measures to be put in place.

### Land clearing moratorium

I suggest that land clearing across Australia should be subject to a general moratorium for a fixed period with a later review. This should be accompanied with suitable compensation to those who can make a real case. Large-scale clearing can be practically restricted through limits on equipment and the use satellite technology for surveillance. Federal administration and if necessary legislation should be applied to avoid the delays evident in setting up such measures across the different states.

### Forestry

I suggest that clearing of old growth native forests on public land be subject to a complete on going ban. There is more than enough plantation timber to met existing needs, and demand reduction measures such as recycling still have significant future potential.

### Transport

Greater efficiency in transport in the sector is needed and can be obtained. Incentive systems need to change. I suggest that clear benefits could be obtained by the removal of tax advantages and subsidies for 4 wheel drive vehicles and diesel fuel. Any policy benefits of such very costly arrangements could be met in other ways which did not send the wrong price signals for energy use and consequent levels of emissions.

### Agriculture Change

Significant government resources will be needed to promote change across the diverse sector of multiple small farms. These resources should be directed under principles of equity and sustainability.

Sustainability, particularly under a likely future of water shortages implies significant reductions in the way land is managed and the extent of land that is used for agriculture. At the 'edges' this will mean regulation and land appropriation to stop all use of vulnerable and non-viable land. Support for drought effected farms needs to be reviewed in terms of long term sustainable using worse (or better) case scenarios. Again suitable compensation should be provided.

### Wind farms

One form this compensation might take is by government engaging farmers much more in hosting sites for wind farms and other forms of alternative low emission energy production.

### Research Investment

Particular forms of land use need to be urgently changed. Investment in research in sustainable energy and sustainable agricultural practices needs to be massively increased at the CSIRO and Australian universities. Research funding at universities is small in comparison with that which supports the mining and coal industries.

### Food - Cultural and demand shifts

A case can be made for measures to shift the demand from certain agricultural products to others. The best research and imaginative solutions need to be obtained. A shift from beef to kangaroo and shifting from energy intensive meat production to grains are just some measures that need to be considered. The government could play a role in promoting some of these shifts in production and consumption demand.

### Tax or trade

The discussion paper does not engage deeply in the complex area of the relative benefits of tax measures versus a trading system (ETS) to reduce emissions. The paper points to the difficulties of measurement when dealing with a trading regime. Particularly in this sector the arguments may well be stronger for a tax-based system that could be tracked through a set of arrangements similar and parallel to the BAS/ GST reporting system. Trust and compliance measures similar to that that apply to the tax system can be used. Costs can be tracked and passed onto the consumer in a way that more directly signals the cost of 'emissions' for various agricultural products.