

The Carbon Tax Bills - Please Abandon These Foolish and Destructive Bills.

*A Submission to the Joint Selection Committee on the so-called "Clean Energy Future Legislation".
Presented to the committee on 22 September 2011 and slightly expanded on 24th September, 2011*

from
The Carbon Sense Coalition
Australia

The Secretary
Joint Selection Committee on Australia's Clean Energy Future Legislation
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

RE: CARBON TAX LEGISLATION INQUIRY – PUBLIC SUBMISSION

This submission is made on behalf of the Carbon Sense Coalition, which is a voluntary Australian organization which opposes real pollution and also opposes the unjustified demonization of carbon minerals and energy.

We see no justification for imposing a tax on Australia's minute additions of carbon dioxide to the atmosphere. Carbon dioxide is a harmless and beneficial atmospheric natural gas comprising less than a tiny 0.04% of the atmosphere. There is no credible evidence that human production of it controls world climate. Nor is it a pollutant.

We are totally opposed to the imposition of a carbon tax because there is no scientific, climate or environmental justification for these bills.

We are also concerned at the impossibly short time allowed for the Australian public and opposition to examine these bills.

We object to the underhand and undemocratic way in which the government is trying to ensure a future government cannot repeal these bills, even when it soon becomes obvious that they are unnecessary, are not being followed by other countries, are destroying Australian jobs, industry and prosperity, and have no effect on climate. It offends the Precautionary Principle so beloved by the alarmist community that a temporary government should try to close off the means to escape when these bills prove to be a ghastly mistake. Australia is already lagging badly in realization that carbon dioxide does not control climate.

There is no credible cost benefit analysis of these proposals. In particular there is no demonstration that Australia's electricity could ever be supplied entirely by alternative energy such as wind and solar. No other country in the world has achieved this – what makes us think we can weave energy miracles?

The bills (if pursued at all) should include appropriate procedures for efficiently dismantling the tax and regulatory regimes proposed without undue financial penalty when they fail to achieve their stated objectives. Or there should be a Sunset Clause should global cooling become obvious.

This package of proposals is so significant and so divisive that it should not be introduced now, but should be the subject of a referendum or a new election.

The brief points below outline our main objections to the package. We can provide supporting documents or evidence for any of these points.

Why these Bills should be resisted, rejected and, if needs be, repealed.

1. There is no evidence that carbon dioxide in the atmosphere controls the climate. However there is strong evidence that global temperature controls the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere via the absorption or emission of this soluble gas from the vast oceans.
2. There is no evidence that the current gentle warm era is unusual or harmful. There have been warmer periods in the past and all have encouraged a profusion of animal and plant life.
3. In the broad sweep of natural climate change it is clear that life on earth has far more to fear from global cooling than from global warming. It is the ice ages that cause massive extinctions. In the long history of life on earth, global warming has never been a threat to the biosphere.
4. There is significant evidence that solar cycles have a notable effect on global temperature and rainfall. The sun, the clouds, the oceans, volcanic dust and the winds create our climate with its cycles, seasons, tides, unpredictable variations and occasional extremes. Carbon dioxide exists as a tiny trace of invisible gas in the atmosphere (1 part of CO₂ per 2,500 parts of other gases). It exerts a steady, moderating, but very tiny influence on global temperatures.
5. The effect of a carbon tax on carbon dioxide in the atmosphere will not be measurable. The effect of a carbon tax on the sun, clouds, oceans, volcanoes and winds will be zero. Therefore a carbon tax will have no measurable effect on global climate, even if every country in the world introduced it.
6. Many of the climate scares, such as loss of corals and rising sea levels, are inventions or exaggerations. Corals have survived for millions of years, have adapted to rising and falling sea levels, and have moved north and south as earth's temperatures changed. Sea levels have been rising slowly for thousands of years, long before steam engines were invented, and current changes are very gentle and not unusual. In fact recent credible studies show sea levels are gently falling.
7. It is nonsense to call carbon dioxide a pollutant. It is better called "The Gas of Life" as it provides the major source of food for all plant life which in turn supports all animal life. Current levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere are lower than they have been many times in the past and significantly lower than is optimal for all life.
8. Every molecule of carbon dioxide released by burning coal today was once part of the atmosphere at a time of prolific growth of the huge forests that formed the coal in the first place, millions of years ago. Burning the coal just recycles the natural carbon and other minerals back to the biosphere where the next generation of plants can use them. Coal is as natural and "green" as the forests from which it came.

9. Mankind does clearly affect his environment with land clearing, cultivation, irrigation, sewerage, garbage, roads, railways, dams and his massive cities of bitumen, concrete, sky scrapers, schools, hospitals, houses and heat generating machines and appliances. The heat from the activities of people and their machines does cause minor but measurable urban heating. Man (and woman) also creates real pollution with smoke, dust and chemical gases, and pollutes waterways and landfill with various waste products. All sensible people want to see a reduction in this real pollution, but carbon dioxide plays no part in it, and a carbon tax will not reduce it.
10. Carbon dioxide has zero ability to produce heat in itself. It does not burn like carbon, coal or wood – it is a harmless and invisible gaseous by-product of burning these fuels. It is not a source of radioactive heat like uranium. All it can do is redirect some of the heat exchanged between the sun and the earth.
11. Carbon dioxide is generally transparent to most heat and light radiation. However, during the day, carbon dioxide in the atmosphere can temporarily interrupt and redirect some of the heat flowing between the sun and the earth (generally keeping the surface cooler than it would have otherwise been). During the night, carbon dioxide again interrupts some of the heat escaping from the surface to space, thus keeping nights warmer than they would have otherwise been. Water vapour has a similar but far greater effect. The net effect on average global temperature is negligible and beneficial to the comfort of life on the surface of the earth.
12. Earth's climate is always changing and cycles of heating and cooling have been a regular feature of earth history for as long as geological and historical records exist. To suggest that man is suddenly causing every extreme weather event is just superstitious scare mongering.
13. To believe that a tax on some Australian businesses which emit carbon dioxide will have the slightest effect on global climate is ludicrous.
14. It is obvious that the glib targets for 5-20% cut in carbon dioxide emissions by 2020 (in spite of rising populations) can NEVER be actually achieved without a massive depression of economic activity. A fake reduction may be achieved by forcing Australian companies to pay billions of dollars to foreign carbon sharps for promises to cut their production of carbon dioxide. In most cases, this will NOT result in any reduction in emissions – at best it will produce largely worthless promises to not increase emissions in future. At worst it will be a massive fraud on the Australian taxpayers and consumers. In all cases, it will see a massive transfer of Australian wealth to foreign countries for zero climate benefit.
15. We are told that most people and businesses will be compensated and thus will not feel any effects from the carbon tax. The whole purpose of the tax is to punish people who use carbon fuels, so they use less of them. If it does not hurt consumers, they will not change their behaviour and the whole thing becomes an exercise in redistributing wealth and enhancing the power of the bureaucracy.
16. It is false to claim that Australia lags the world in waging war on carbon. The Kyoto Protocol is dead. Only western Europe and New Zealand are moving with us on this suicidal path – they lead the energy lemmings. Perhaps New Zealand hopes to cope without too much pain by using more of their abundant hydro and geothermal energy while most European countries have access to significant hydro, nuclear or geothermal energy.

17. Australia has NONE of these non-carbon energy sources ready to start producing electricity. Nuclear is feasible but politically unacceptable. It would take a decade at least to get political and regulatory approval, and probably as long again for construction, so nuclear is not really in our energy equation. And unlike Iceland and New Zealand, Australia has no easy geothermal sites – if we find any, it will be decades before it could make significant contributions to the electricity grid. We do produce hydro power, but the chances of getting the Greens to approve a dam anywhere, let alone in more mountainous country with gradients suitable for hydro power, is very low. Moreover, our best hydro sites are either already developed, or are sterilised in heritage areas and national parks.

Therefore Australia's current and future energy needs depend solely on coal and gas, the very fuels that Bob Brown's green extremists want to tax, regulate and litigate to death. It is an act of national economic suicide to attempt to destroy our ability to generate low cost energy.

18. The computerised climate models so beloved by the UN IPCC and the CSIRO have never made successful predictions and there is no reason to believe they will ever mimic the complexity of factors affecting climate at any point.
19. Even if the warming projections from the scare forecasters were accepted, the minor changes in temperature envisaged are small compared to the actual daily and annual variations in temperature experienced at any point on earth. The difference in average temperature between Brisbane and Sydney or Melbourne is more than the worst global warming scares. The temperature change that occurs while we eat breakfast is probably greater than any global warming that could be caused by doubling carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. The idea that laughably small temperature changes will somehow do untold damage to life on earth is ludicrous.
20. It is obvious that there is no consensus on the science supporting the alarmist climate models. A very large and growing group of scientists with relevant knowledge or experience is actively challenging the alarmist models. They will not go away.
21. Wind and solar energy can never provide reliable electric power at a cost the consumers can afford or Australian businesses can use in a competitive world. They provide unreliable and intermittent power, at a high cost, and also need massive investment in backup carbon-based power facilities and new transmission lines.
22. All spending on carbon geo-sequestration should cease. This is an enormously costly program to do something that is unnecessary and which will waste much of our precious energy resources and community savings.
23. Our fleets of cars, tractors, trucks, trains, ships, dozers and aircraft are not going to run on sunbeams and sea breezes – they need coal, diesel, petrol or gas to keep moving. If they stop moving, our cities will starve in a few days.
24. Subsidising and mandating the use of ethanol produced from food crops is a foolish policy with no benefits for the climate or the environment.

25. The suggestion that emissions from farm livestock are net additions of carbon to the atmosphere is just plain wrong. Every atom of carbon emitted by livestock (in carbon dioxide or methane) is taken from the grass and grains the animal eats, which in turn is taken from the atmosphere by growing plants using photosynthesis and energy from the sun. Methane that returns to the atmosphere soon oxidises back to carbon dioxide which is then taken up by plants. It is a perpetual carbon cycle that has been going on since life began. Earth survived emissions from the vast mobs of ancient auroch cattle which roamed Europe, the bison and antelopes of the American grassland, the wild herds of grazing animals which roamed free over all the African plains, and the kangaroos and bushfires which regularly harvested the Australian grasslands.
26. In the carbon cycle, trees are just like animals - temporary storehouses for carbon. They are not some special stand-alone life form to be worshipped unconditionally and subsidised thoughtlessly. Every molecule of carbon dioxide that is "captured" when the tree is growing creates the leaves, bark and wood and is stored there. While growing, the tree will shed bark, leaves and branches. These will fall to the ground and decompose, releasing the carbon to the soil, to bacteria or back to the atmosphere as carbon dioxide. Eventually, the tree itself will die or be used for timber structures. Eventually all of the tree will rot or be burnt and every carbon atom that was taken from the atmosphere will be end up back in the atmosphere. The same cyclic process occurs for all plant life, including food crops, grasses and algae. All that varies is the time for the complete cycle to occur.
27. The criticism that Australia leads the world in per capita emissions of carbon dioxide is a silly conclusion from nonsense calculations. Australians are very large suppliers of coal, minerals, food and fibre to consumers all over the world. We utilise large equipment fleets and have a massive transport network to move this food, fibre, energy and minerals to our own capitals and to world consumers. Those consumers should be the ones responsible for the emissions generated by a handful of productive Australians to produce our flood of raw materials. Moreover our grasslands, rivers, oceans and soils are net absorbers of carbon dioxide. A fair and more complete calculation would probably show that Australia is a net absorber of carbon dioxide.
28. There is no justification for Australia to seek the role of the Pied Piper leading a diminishing band of climate lemmings over the cliffs of alarm onto the hard rocks of reality far below. The Europeans will rue the day they spent their savings on energy chimeras.

We do not claim confidentiality for this submission, and are happy for it to be published. We are also willing to appear before the Committee to answer questions or present material.

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"Carbon Sense" is a newsletter produced by the Carbon Sense Coalition, an Australian based organisation which opposes waste of resources, opposes pollution, and promotes the rational and sustainable use of carbon energy and carbon food.
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