



Australian Senate

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media release

Garnaut's policy doesn't match his science: We need transformation, not incrementalism

Canberra, Friday 4 July 2008 Professor Garnaut's portrayal of the urgency of climate change does not match his support for a slow start to emissions trading and incremental economic change, Australian Greens climate change spokesperson, Senator Christine Milne, said today.

Senator Milne said, "Professor Garnaut has come a long way in a short period of time with the complex science of climate change. But there is still a serious mismatch between his apparent understanding of the urgency of the issue and the cautious and incrementalist policy prescriptions that lie underneath his rhetoric of great change.

"Garnaut's warning that delay is not an option is completely disingenuous in the context of his recommendation of a slow start to the scheme, capping the price of carbon before 2012 and not seeking to go beyond Australia's pitiful commitment in Kyoto's first phase. If we are to have a real chance of avoiding catastrophic, runaway climate change, we will need rapid, transformative policies to build a new post-carbon economy, not ad hoc, incremental change that prioritises increasing our wealth over protecting our future.

"The sooner we build new zero-carbon infrastructure, the sooner the costs will come down. It makes both economic and environmental sense to seize this opportunity to rebuild Australia's manufacturing sector for a green collar revolution, investing in a huge expansion of education and training. This opportunity puts paid to the doom and gloom foreshadowed for the Hunter and Latrobe Valleys as long as the Government provides structural adjustment assistance to help transition to the new economy rather than trying to shore up coal.

"The Greens strongly support Professor Garnaut on many of his design positions. In particular, we applaud his support for 100% auctioning of permits, for immediate broad coverage including all energy, industrial emissions and transport, and for the appropriate use of complementary measures such as mandatory renewable energy targets and feed-in tariffs.

"On the vexed issue of compensation, Professor Garnaut's focus on equity, and supporting low income Australians well ahead of industry, is pleasing. However, we would like to see more of this compensation in the form of investment in energy efficiency rather than welfare payments.

"As the Professor acknowledged when answering a question on transport and fuel excise, providing alternatives gives permanent relief from rising prices and supports the scheme's goal of reducing greenhouse emissions.

"Troublingly, Professor Garnaut is in denial about Australia's domestic forestry industry and its greenhouse emissions. It is vitally important that, in addition to protecting PNG's forests, we stop destroying Australia's own magnificent and biodiverse forest carbon stores.

"Professor Garnaut's 'no' to nuclear power is counterbalanced by his resounding 'yes' to coal. If he truly understood the urgency of climate change, Professor Garnaut would not see coal with geosequestration as a saviour, since it is a technology which, even if it can be proven, it will never provide low enough emissions energy to be a long-term options.

"Professor Garnaut's view that we are a long way from needing to help the Hunter and Latrobe build a future beyond coal fails by his own test of urgency."

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