



Australian Senate

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media release

No signal for change: Protecting polluters, hurting the community

Canberra, Wednesday 16 July 2008 The Rudd Government's Green Paper has failed the test of true leadership by neutralising the carbon price signal and still providing no responsible target, Australian Greens climate change spokesperson, Senator Christine Milne, said today.

Senator Milne said, "Minister Wong's Green Paper protects polluters and provides no signal for investment for a zero-emissions future. Minister Wong used the term 'transformation' many times in her speech, but the scheme proposed here provides no drivers at all for transformation, instead protecting existing investments at all costs.

"Minister Wong told Australia today that the greenhouse problem is caused by the fact that there is currently no cost to producing carbon dioxide and no limit on the amount that can be produced. This Green Paper effectively neutralises any costs it imposes and we are still waiting for the limit. The Government's 60% 2050 target is irresponsibly behind the science, which demands a shift to net carbon neutrality as soon as feasible.

"Prime Minister Rudd and Minister Wong warned that protecting some sectors from emissions trading will put greater costs on everyone else, and that is exactly what they have done with free permits to trade exposed industries and payments to protect coal.

"Emissions trading is about changing investment decisions, but the Government has taken every opportunity to protect the investments of polluters, from coal fired power stations to aluminium smelters to native forest loggers. The Government has its foot on the brake and the accelerator at the same time.

"The Government has included petrol in the scheme with one hand and effectively removed it with the other, pretending that the scheme will have broad coverage while really excluding transport. This will have the disastrous impact of substantially reducing the Government's ability to invest in the mass transit alternatives that will provide the real, permanent savings to Australians battling increasing oil prices and national dependency on foreign oil.

"Giving free permits for the aluminium sector and other trade exposed industries out to 2020 and beyond sends absolutely no signal for those industries to reduce their emissions. Protecting the coal generators and subsidising geosequestration is a decision to lock renewable energy out of Australia.

"Cash compensation payments to industry and householders will only delay the pain, and increase it when the crunch comes. Responsible compensation would help householders and industry to reduce their carbon costs through energy efficiency. This means a systemic roll-out of energy efficiency measures, not just an education campaign.

"The forest industry will benefit from carbon credits from plantation establishment, but will bear absolutely no cost for the native forest logging which sends millions of tonnes of carbon dioxide to the atmosphere every year.

"The Greens look forward to a rigorous debate on this proposal to ensure that the legislation that eventually comes before the Senate able to be rescued."

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