

Submission to Climate Change Authority on Targets and Progress Review Draft Report
by Mark Zanker, private citizen

I thought long and hard about whether to make a submission. Given the policy settings adopted by the current government on the issue of climate change, it seems to me highly unlikely that anything the Authority recommends will be implemented. Indeed the Authority itself is slated for abolition.

I agree wholeheartedly that the 5% emission reduction target over 1990 levels is utterly inadequate. Even the 25% reduction the Authority is proposing seems to me to be nowhere near enough. An assumption underlying the draft recommendation is that if cuts are made to carbon emission of this magnitude, then there is a 67% chance of avoiding increasing global average temperature by more than 2 degrees Celsius. In his recent books *Storms of my Grandchildren*, Professor James Hansen expresses considerable doubt that this can be done and additionally expresses the view that an increase of 1.5 degrees is probably too much. I adopt what he says. Further, as long ago as 2009 at the 4 degrees plus conference at Oxford University, Professor Hans Joachim Schellnhuber, Director of the Potsdam Institute of Climate Research (www.dik-potsdam.de) expressed considerable doubt whether it would be possible to avoid an average increase of temperature beyond 2 degrees. See:

<http://www.eci.ox.ac.uk/4degrees/programme.php>

Given the fact that there has been an increase in global emissions since that time, and that atmospheric CO2 concentrations are now at 400 parts per million, the greatest concentration in over 800,000 years, it is difficult to be confident that the 2 degree line will be held.

The other point I wish to make is that too much emphasis is given in discussions about climate change of the costs to the economy and to business about attempting to cut emissions too rapidly. A great many businesses, but in particular the mining industry want to continue with business as usual irrespective of the future cost. This feigned hysteria about impacts on business and the economy is nothing more than a reflection of the greed and myopia of organisations like the Minerals Council of Australia and its corporate members. The real question is how to avoid the likely economic and social catastrophe that will undoubtedly occur as rising sea levels inundate coastal areas, and as hitherto productive land areas in Australia lose their productive value or indeed become uninhabitable. Adaptation is not likely to be feasible.

Australia should be showing some leadership on this issue instead of acting in the manner of an international pariah and spoiler. We should be aiming for a 50% reduction in emissions by 2030 with a zero trajectory from there out to 2050. I can hear the howls of protest from those with a vested interest in the carbon economy, but it seems to me that any intelligent person can make an opportunity out a challenge, particularly when they have vast amount of money to spend, as the like of BHP Billiton and Rio Tinto do. To do nothing is to buy a ticket on the express train to extinction.

Mark A Zanker
28 November 2013