

TO HON PAUL FLETCHER, Minister for Territories, Local Government and Major Projects

CC CLIMATE CHANGE AUTHORITY
Please treat this letter as a submission to your *Second Draft Report Special Review* of Australia's Climate Policy Options,
submissions@climatechangeauthority.gov.au

Despondent with climate policies – Tony’s Cronies need science & economic lessons

Dear Paul

I write in dismay and utter frustration at your government's seriously inadequate position on climate change. I finish my letter with some questions and suggestions for the Minister for the Environment. This letter is also copied to the Climate Change Authority and blind copied to others with a keen interest in carbon abatement.

I was planning to respond to the *Second Draft Report* of the Climate Change Authority on its *Special Review* of Australia's Climate Policy Options (Nov 2015). The Authority called for comment. The government’s current, deplorable climate situation warranted this broader response, so this is also my response to the Authority.

As a senior scientist and environmental manager for over 25 years in industry, government and university I have had sustained involvement in the science and policies of climate change. I have submitted many submissions: to the Rudd government's CPRS, the Garnaut Reviews (2008, 2011) and the Gillard government's Clean Energy Future program. Naturally, I asked myself, ***what is the basis of this new report?***

Hunting Wozzles round the spinney [being “Foolish and Deluded”]

The Minister for the environment, the Honourable Greg Hunt, requested the Authority on 10 December 2014 to conduct a review [Ref ⁱ] to:

"Assess whether Australia should have an Emission Trading Scheme in the future and what conditions should trigger the introduction of such a scheme."

Hang on, in late 2006, Prime Minister John Howard announced the establishment of a joint government–business Task Group on Emissions Trading.

In February 2007 Mr Howard said [Ref ⁱⁱ];

“There can be no argument that greenhouse gases are having an adverse impact on the earth’s environment.”

And in May 2007 the Task Group on Emissions Trading reported (the ‘Shergold report’, Ref ii) saying;

“The Task Group believes that adoption of a post-2012 cap should be accompanied by timely and decisive action to introduce an Australian emissions trading scheme as a key

measure to enable us to meet future constraints on emissions at the least cost.”

and:

“The Task Group believes it should be possible to commence trading in 2011 if a decision to establish an emissions trading scheme were to be taken in 2007.”

Remember Pooh and Piglet hunting Woozles round the spinney? Each time they went round they discovered new tracks in the snow [their own!] But they never got anywhere.

Isn't the Government doing the same here?

Let's not reinvent the wheel – and waste everyone's time

The Second Draft Report of the Climate Change Authority on its *Special Review of Australia's Climate Policy Options* (to be completed by June 2016) was initiated under Mr Tony Abbott's prime ministership. But now we have Mr Turnbull as Prime Minister. He well understands climate change and the merits of pricing carbon with an ETS or tax.

So this report with many iterations of drafts and public comment and later a final report is being prepared for the government whose prime minister clearly believes in addressing climate change with a bipartisan policy on an ETS. ***Why are we raking over old coals and wasting time and effort on this charade?***

Ministry of Truth – burns the books!

There have been many substantial Australian reports since the initial Shergold Report in 2007, initiated by Mr Howard. They were mentioned earlier. They provide a wealth of ideas, information and policy options. They include many hundreds, probably thousands, of public submissions with a diversity of views.

Amazingly and despairingly these excellent reports are not mentioned in the Authority's draft of Nov 2015 when I searched for 'CPRS', 'Clean Energy Future' and 'Garnaut' [except once in an indirect reference in a consultant's reference]. Nor are most of the reports available by a Google search. Only the two Garnaut Reviews are readily available. The Garnaut Review website and its papers still fortunately exist [Ref ⁱⁱⁱ].

One has to wonder whether the Authority was asked to ignore the substantial and comprehensive analyses by Australia's top economists, including our preeminent climate economist, Ross Garnaut?

Why are the earlier government reports not available? ***Is this a case of Orwell's Ministry of Truth or Hitler burning the books?*** If so, it is a deplorable indictment of the Government's preparedness to have an honest debate using all of the information available. Pooh and Piglet wouldn't have had their fumbling confusion if they had had a map and recorded their progress.

Mainstream Libs 'get' climate change but Tony's Cronies thwart action

I noted how Howard 'got' climate change in 2007 (though later he became a climate agnostic!). Both Abbott and Hunt tirelessly say that they believe the science of climate

change. Their actions, however, suggest they are speaking through their hats!

Yet Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull clearly believes in addressing climate change with a bipartisan policy on an ETS. His eloquent address to Parliament on 8 February 2009 in support of Rudd's CPRS is copybook Liberal policy – his speech is attached.

But lo, now the NSW Liberals want an inquiry into whether climate science is settled or not. Hello! The Letters' page in the Sydney Morning Herald erupted in a crescendo of disbelief and ridicule on 10 Mar 2016. Tony Windsor has called these Liberal climate deniers, 'Abbott's nasties' but Tony's Cronies is less harsh. ***Why does the party let ignorant minorities thwart responsible policy appraisal and implementation? Why let subjective ideology overrule objective science?***

Gillard's government implemented and successfully operated the Clean Energy Future program and the carbon tax for two years. It successfully cut our emissions. Shamefully, Mr Abbott and his 'nasties' waged a populist, vicious and mendacious attack on the 'dreaded' Carbon Tax – remember the \$100 roast! Whatever happened to bipartisan policies for the long-term good of the country?

Abbott's 'axing the tax' is a shameful part of Australian political history. Our descendants will rue the day Mr Abbott rescinded Australia's effective and commendable efforts to manage climate change. They will pay more as a result of his wanton destruction. History will judge this recklessness.

Other views

In 2009, the then new British High Commissioner to Australia, Baroness Amos, said [Ref ^{iv}];

“I have been surprised that the science itself is being questioned,” she said. “These are things where there have been debates over a long period of time in other countries and where we have reached conclusions and moved on.

“In the UK, there is a degree of political consensus about what in broad terms needs to be done. There is a lot of debate about how we do it. You would certainly not see on a daily basis . . . the kind of negative reporting that you have here.”

Hard right Liberals ignore science & flout the Party's economic principles

Unfortunately, Mr Turnbull in winning the prime ministership from Mr Abbott apparently agreed to retain the climate policies of Mr Abbott. This is absurd! This was to appease the hard right elements in the party – Tony's Cronies. It is extraordinary that ideologies overrule science in determining Party policy on this critical issues. It is supposed to be an economically rational party that believes in getting the pricing right and allowing personal choice (the 'market') to determine the outcome. Absurdly, the Abbott/Hunt Direct Action policy pays carbon polluters for *estimated* emission reductions using tax payer funds. This is the very antithesis of core Liberal doctrine, let alone rational economics. Yet Mr Hunt co-wrote a major thesis entitled, “*A tax to make the polluter pay*”, ca 1981.

It gets worse, Direct Action subsidises polluters causing a *greater* budget deficit of some \$billions. But the government, concerned about the deficit and following Greg Hunt's thesis, could *reduce* the deficit by reimposing a tax or ETS, raising up to \$8 billion. Is this Alice in Wonderland?

Surely the Government should renounce the Direct Action policy and reintroduce a tax or ETS, eg, the Clean Energy Future program? Much of it still remains.

Questions and Suggestions for the Minister

Paul, I would be pleased if you could seek the Minister's response to my questions above, copied here but to be interpreted in context above:

1. ***What is the basis of this new report?***
2. ***Why are we raking over old coals and wasting time and effort on this charade?***
3. ***Is this a case of Orwell's Ministry of Truth or Hitler burning the books?***

Suggestion re Q3 – the Minister should ensure that all significant and public government authored reports on climate change policy should be easily available on a website, probably that of the Department of Environment.

4. ***Why does the party let ignorant minorities thwart responsible policy appraisal and implementation? Why let subjective ideology overrule objective science?***
5. ***How do you explain this apparent contradiction?***
6. ***Surely the Government should renounce the Direct Action policy and reintroduce a tax or ETS, eg, the Clean Energy Future program? Much of it still remains.***

I expect the Prime Minister would also wish to see the Minister's response to my questions? Maybe the PM could hold a seminar for Tony's Cronies to find out where they are coming from and explain the science and economics inherent in his speech to the House – as well as the dangerous threats of global warming. Else as a last resort he could shirt front them!

The Coalition has been going in circles too long hunting climate policy Woozles round the spinney. Like Pooh, it knows, "I have been Foolish and Deluded".

It's time the Coalition government acted decisively.

Attachment:

Turnbull speech for CPRS 8 Feb 2010.pdf

Yours sincerely

Harley Wright

Striving to avoid dangerous climate change

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References:

ⁱ Minister Greg Hunt letter to climate Climate Change Authority request for “Special review by the Climate Change Authority”, 10 Dec 2014

ⁱⁱ Report of the Task Group on Emissions Trading, May 2007, page 15

ⁱⁱⁱ Garnaut Reviews, 2008, 2011, available at; <http://www.garnautreview.org.au/>

^{iv} Envoy surprised by climate of scepticism; at <http://www.smh.com.au/environment/envoy-surprised-by-climate-of-scepticism-20091112-icg5.html>

Pooh and Piglet go Hunting

