

Thank you for the opportunity to submit the following views on Australia's future emissions reduction goals and policies.

The writer, like the majority of Australians,¹ is aware of the mounting global evidence of the serious effects of global warming caused by historically unprecedented levels of greenhouse gas emissions resulting from human activity. To any thinking person, the evidence is worrying in the extreme. Against this, there is evidence that great strides are being made around the world in harnessing the abundant energy of the sun to bring rapidly to an end the need to emit destructive levels of greenhouse gases in powering the same human activity.

The scale of carbon-free resources available to all humanity and to Australians in particular is well described in a recent publication by the think tank Beyond Zero Emissions (BZE)². With understandable provisos, the report estimates (p. 43) the renewable energy resource comprising solar and wind only within 'the marketable zone' to be 3,400 EJ per year. Given that total global energy consumption is probably still less than 500 EJ per year, this indicates that Australia alone is blessed with a continuous energy resource capable of supplying annual total world demand seven times over. BZE's recommendation to the Australian government? – 'Don't be timid, plan for a zero emission future'.

Australia should immediately send a signal that it means business by cancelling its carryover credits from the first Kyoto Protocol commitment period (2008 – 2012). Then if, as predicted, we meet our 5% emission reduction commitment ahead of the 2020 deadline we should press on with whatever policies are working and similarly cancel any further potential carryover credits accruing.

We should also adopt as a minimum the Authority's recommended post 2020 targets of 36% below 2005 levels by 2025 and 45% to 65% below 2005 levels by 2030, with an ultimate target of zero net emissions by 2050, following the example of South Australia.

We could achieve these reductions by aggressively pursuing a policy of orderly transition away from fossil fuels, involving:

- The abolishment of all tax concessions and subsidies associated with the extraction and use of fossil fuels;
- The implementation of an escalating price on carbon commencing at \$40/tonne CO₂e;
- The implementation of a stronger RET – 100% by 2030
- Stronger energy efficiency regulation – mandatory energy efficiency disclosure in all states and territories, and higher star ratings for appliances and buildings;

¹ Climate of the Nation 2015_ Attitudes to Climate Change, The Climate Institute
http://www.climateinstitute.org.au/climate-of-the-nation-2015.html?gclid=CjwKEAiA9JW2BRDxtaq2ruDg22oSJACgtTxcFdqr1ZkhMFiX63EEG5sS2dfKyQJqqGAb3SFgtrWJSRoCAf3w_wcB

² Zero Carbon Australia_Renewable Energy Superpower, Beyond Zero Emissions, 2015

- Proceeding with high speed rail links Melbourne-Sydney and Sydney-Brisbane, investing in HSR a proportion of the funds allocated to states for roads;
- Incentives for electric vehicles – no sales tax, favourable registration fees, etc.;
- National feed-in tariffs for solar;
- Enactment of bans on land clearing in all states and territories;
- Introduction of incentives for large scale revegetation focussed on marginal production areas;
- Energy market reform to bring Australian electricity prices below OECD average; and
- Introduction of vehicle efficiency standards commencing with the light vehicle emission standards recommended by the Authority in 2012.

In the above-referenced publication, BZE has convincingly argued that Australia is uniquely well placed to become a superpower in a zero-carbon world. The reason for this is the low cost energy which we will have to offer, and the attractiveness of this especially to energy-intensive industries. To take advantage of the renewable energy resources which make this possible we need to waste no time in shaking off our fossil fuel shackles. We should put an immediate moratorium on all new coal and gas developments and prepare for an orderly transition towards renewable energy. The way **not** to show that we mean business is to continue pretending that coal has a future, perhaps even giving a false impression to miners that the government is in a position to use tax-payers' funds to save them from their inevitable demise.³

Contrast our image of ourselves as enterprising leaders in the world of business with other media coverage: "The 2014 American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy (ACEEE) International Scorecard ranked Australia last out of 16 major OECD countries for the energy efficiency of the transport sector."⁴...and

"..... Australia Last year fell off the list of the Top 10 countries for renewables investment after a horror year of policy uncertainty drove an 80 per cent 'plunge' in 2014 utility-scale financing – from \$2.1 billion in 2013 to \$330 million"⁵

How long can our national self-respect survive attacks like these?

John Gare

³ 'Digging an even deeper hole for coal', Michael West in 'The Age' and 'The Sydney Morning Herald' and 'The Canberra Times' 19 Feb. 2016

⁴ American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy (ACEEE) (n.d) *Australia*. Accessed at <<http://aceee.org/files/pdf/country/australia.pdf>> [14 January 2016]

⁵ 'South Africa, India buck renewables slowdown, in shift away from coal', Sophie Vorrath in *RenewEconomy* 13 April 2015.