

“Keep it Simple, Stupid”

A Submission from:

The Carbon Sense Coalition

www.carbon-sense.com

to

the Commonwealth Department of Climate Change (DOCC)
on its proposals for a

National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting System.

11 February 2008

(Submissions to be forwarded to the Greenhouse and Energy Reporting Taskforce by 13 February 2008 at: reporting@climatechange.gov.au)

1. Introduction

DOCC has produced a paper that reads like the missing chapter from “Alice in Wonderland”. If this proposal is enforced, it will continue the UJC process already in strong growth in the new de-carbonisation industry (“UJC” = Useless Jobs Creation).

The Carbon Sense Coalition (“Carbon Sense”) believes that carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is a boon to all life. It provides temperature insulating benefits in the atmosphere but is a very minor player in the factors that cause long term cyclic changes to earth’s temperature. Stopping or reducing man’s output of CO₂ would be economically disastrous, a blow to the environment, but climatically irrelevant.

It follows from the above that Carbon Sense opposes all de-carbonisation proposals and thus believes that DOCC’s scheme for calculating, measuring and reporting on everything that burns, moves, or works anywhere, anytime in Australia is just so much UJC.

However, the European world, following the Pied Piper of Gore, seems determined to rush over the de-carbonisation cliff.

This submission is designed to:

- Warn once again about the fate of lemmings.
- Recommend changes to the DOCC proposals to make the ultimate landing softer, and the chances of survival better.

2. Previous Warnings

Carbon Sense has already made known its views on the lack of evidence or proof that man-made CO₂ has caused or will cause dangerous global warming. These comprise:

- 1 A submission to the Garnaut Review, “The Sky is not Falling”, which recommends that no action be taken on any de-carbonisation proposals until a Royal Commission is held on the Science of Global Warming:
<http://carbon-sense.com/wp-content/uploads/2008/01/garnaut-submission.pdf>
- 2 A specific proposal from a group of Australian and New Zealand organisations and scientists to set up such a Royal Commission (the ANZIG Enquiry):
<http://carbon-sense.com/2008/02/05/time-for-an-australia-new-zealand-royal-commission-on-global-warming/>
- 3 A Submission to the Queensland Government, “Look before you Leap”, on their Proposed Energy and Climate Policies. In it, The Carbon Sense Coalition accuses the Queensland Government of proposing draconian policies which will have no effect whatsoever on global temperature, but will, if pursued, do tremendous damage to most Queenslanders:
<http://carbon-sense.com/wp-content/uploads/2007/06/look.pdf>

The points in the above reports will not be repeated here, but they should be treated as part of this submission.

This submission aims to minimise harm even if, for some perverse reason, the strong and well based warnings in previous submissions are ignored.

In addition, Carbon Sense is totally opposed to any scheme of Carbon Emissions Trading. If we must pay the Dark Green Carbon Tax, let us do it directly, openly and honestly via a flat rate carbon tax on every tonne of carbon contained in direct emissions. The DOCC reporting should thus be confined to that role alone.

We hope cooler heads prevail and all of these de-carbonisation plans come to naught. However, the lemmings may prevail, so we must take sensible precautions.

3. You must Crawl before you Walk

The DOCC document “National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting System” comprises 150 pages of turgid text and detailed directions on sampling, estimating, reporting, auditing every fuel used, every bit of energy used or produced, every gaseous emission (including fugitive ones) from every significant business in the land. This represents an enormous conscripted investment by the Australian people into UJC. Any reduction in this scandalous waste is a national benefit.

If we must introduce a tax on carbon emissions, we should start simply. There will be huge problems and costs, so let’s minimise the data demanded, the people who must report and the matters reported on.

All that is required by the government for a simple Dark Green Carbon Tax is a report of the tonnes of carbon fuel consumed directly, or the direct carbon emissions produced.

Thus Carbon Sense believes:

- The only gases produced by man which could be significant in global warming are water vapour and carbon dioxide. Thankfully, DOCC seems unaware that water in all its forms is far more significant for global warming than CO₂, so that leaves only CO₂ that is worth collecting data for.
- Methane, although a more effective temperature insulator than CO₂, does not last long in the atmosphere – it oxidises to CO₂. Moreover, nature is a massive emitter of methane, so emissions from the activities of man, woman, sheep and cow are not relevant. Major industrial emitters of methane should not be required to report more than the tonnes of methane emitted, with each tonne of carbon treated and counted the same as a tonne of carbon in CO₂.
- There is no need for every taxpayer to be forced to wade thru books of instructions on the chemical composition, energy equivalent etc for every carbon fuel or industrial pollutant. For the accuracy required in this exercise (which produces nothing but waste for every Australian) governments should take tonnes of carbon fuel consumed and do whatever calculations they like. Any taxpayer who objects to their calculation of the Dark Green Carbon Tax should have the right to make corrections.
- Only five simple categories are required: brown coal, black coal, liquid hydrocarbons, gaseous hydrocarbons and other carbon emissions (eg in cement making or chemical plants).
- Emissions of pollutants such as oxides of nitrogen and sulphur, organic compounds of fluorine or other organic chemicals should be reported to the EPA. They have no place here in assessment of emissions of non-toxic, non polluting carbon dioxide. They are already reported in the voluminous and detailed reports required by the National Pollution Inventory. Do not reinvent that wheel.
- Delete all requirements to report all energy produced, transported and consumed. The Greenhouse mandate for DOCC, if there is one, only covers man-made carbon emissions, not every aspect of energy use. What have windmills, solar panels and hydro plants got to do with data on man's emissions of carbon gases?
- Delete all reporting on guesses of carbon gases produced by the disposal, decay, composting or burning of organic waste, agricultural products, dead pasture, scrub re-growth, waste water, animal manure, human sewerage, land fill etc. Nothing organic in the world can be produced before first extracting its needed carbon from the soil or the atmosphere. All carbon in the soil comes from plants and animals who extracted it from the atmosphere. Therefore every molecule of carbon emitted by decay, combustion or digestion of recent organic matter came from the CO₂ in the air, not long ago. It is a zero sum game and a farcical waste of time measuring it.

- The same argument applies with equal force to every emission of CO₂ by domestic and wild animals. Every tonne of carbon emitted from either end of a cow, sheep, pig or crocodile was not created from nothing by some sort of animal alchemy. It was extracted from the atmosphere by the plants that produced the pasture, the grains or the animal products that living animals feed on. Every tonne of carbon in their emissions is balanced exactly, molecule by molecule, by a tonne of carbon extracted from the air not long ago. (Agriculture is mentioned in DOCC's doomsday book, but the subject is coyly not discussed further. Carbon Sense recommends that it be kept that way.)
- Delete all references to "Indirect Emissions". It is the coal fired power station that emits the CO₂, not the factory in Brisbane or Bundaberg using the electricity. The costs of Dark Green Taxes and Red Tape will quickly filter to every power user in the land. Prices will quickly cause adjustments in their usage. If solar power is cheaper than coal power (pray carbon taxes are never THAT HIGH, but nightmares do sometimes come true) electricity distributors will quickly buy or produce more of it. There is no need for government snoops to be collecting data on it.

4. Conclusions

Australia is facing a time of unusual uncertainty. Current world climatic and economic conditions are so good that it is unlikely they will get better, and they may get worse, possibly significantly worse.

World climate is unusually benign – the increasing warmth since about 1850 has caused increased evaporation and an overall increase in world precipitation. The warming oceans (with some contribution from man's activities) have caused a moderate increase in carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. These three beneficial atmospheric conditions (warmth, plant food and water) have greatly encouraged plant growth, causing a large increase in food production on earth since the 1850's ("the green revolution"). This has allowed a parallel surge in human population.

However, even a glance at climate history shows that current conditions are not usual, and a cold, dry, CO₂ deficient atmosphere is much more normal. Scientists who study the sun are suggesting, even now, that a period of global cooling is likely. Cooling oceans will remove water vapour and CO₂ from the atmosphere, immediately reducing plant growth. This will naturally cause an immediate reduction in food production and hunger stress for many overpopulated countries and regions. We are thus probably at or past a medium term natural peak in food production. When that outlook is added to foolish policies in the world food bowls in North America, Australia and Europe to divert crop land, grains and sugar to producing motor fuel instead of food, we have a looming food crisis on our doorstep. It is not the time to add more costs and uncertainty to food production or to divert even more food to motor cars, all on the authority of a bunch of unscientific alarmists pushing other agendas.

Australia's economy is also having the greatest boom since the wool boom during the Korean War in the 1950's. Neither bean-stalks nor economic booms grow to the sky. A dispassionate observer would say things are unlikely to get much better and may get significantly worse. It is not the time to be saddling our backbone industries of mining, agriculture, mineral processing and tourism with higher taxes, more expensive energy and more uncertainty. It is also not the time to be destroying jobs and increasing consumers' costs for electricity, fuel and food.

It follows from the above that the Carbon Sense Coalition is totally opposed to the premature imposition of any de-carbonisation proposals in Australia – no emissions trading systems, no cap and trade nonsense, no subsidies for converting food to motor spirit, no mandating of fairyland energy proposals and no more carbon taxes. Let us have an Independent Enquiry into the Science of global warming first.

However, if we were forced to choose between all the above unpalatable de-carbonisation alternatives, we would strongly support a simple carbon tax on all net direct emissions of CO₂ from all industries. This should cause the IMMEDIATE abolition of all the other state and federal Greenhouse foolishness (mandated energy shares and all special energy taxes and subsidies). As soon as the climate and the science make it clear, even to people like DOCC, that man does not control the climate, we can then easily abolish the silly carbon tax (amid great rejoicing among those who do not dwell in the capital city hothouses).

Thus we strongly recommend that the proposals from Commonwealth Department of Climate Change (DOCC) for a National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting System be simplified and reduced to the essentials required for a simple carbon tax on direct emissions. They should NOT be made mandatory before we see an Independent Enquiry into the science of global warming.

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