

F.A.O Julia Gillard,

Dear Prime Minister,

I welcome your comments that the Government will be taking a fresh look at the climate change strategy. Many people voted for the Labour Government at the last election because of its strong stance on climate change and were very disappointed when the trading scheme was shelved.

I hope the enclosed proposal "resolving climate change" is useful in helping the Government develop a revised climate change strategy.

I have circulated the attached proposal widely, and received very positive support for the plan. I feel that you making a statement on the Governments new thinking on climate change, before the election, would receive widespread support from the environmentally sensitive section of the community.

A trading scheme is an essential tool for fighting climate change, but there are two key issues which have to be resolved for it to be effective and popular with the public.

Firstly there must be a supply of real carbon credits; people are very suspicious of the virtual carbon offsets for example that occurred in the EU scheme where the Eastern block countries were able to sell carbon credits simply because their economies were in recession. The population well understand this and are deeply suspicious of tricks in carbon accounting; they want to see real reduction in carbon.

Secondly the population well understands that Australia's contribution to green house gases is relatively very small and wants to see International agreement, particularly from the developing countries such as China. Bjorn Lombard has indicated that currently the developing countries are responsible for 40% of global emissions and this is expected to rise to 70%.

These are the two key issues addressed in my proposal which, in its first phase, shows how Australia can help China achieve a reduction in real carbon emissions.

While I am sure many Australians hope that the Government resurrects its trading scheme they well understand that these major issues must be resolved before they would fully support any trading scheme.

Many Australians, even those who are generally supportive of strong government action on climate change have queried why we should jeopardize our industries and standard of living. They appreciate the reality that the bulk of the emissions will come from the developing countries and what we do nationally will make a very small difference to global emissions.

I want to offer a solution to this impasse and hope my rather long proposal "resolving climate change" adequately presents the plan. I hope that this proposal will be helpful to the Government in formulating its revised strategy.

It is always dangerous to over simplify complex problems but let me just give you the essence of the proposal here but before taking a view on these suggestions I urge you to study the details in my proposal.

I have spent significant time in developing countries and was asked (by World Vision) to go to Ethiopia to see if I could develop a way of providing sustenance food in times of drought. This led to the concept of the wicking bed. In essence a subsurface organic sponge contained within a water proof liner allows nutrient rich water to wick up to the root zone, giving high productivity with minimal water loss by evaporation or seepage beyond the root zone.

One of the benefits of the system is that it sequesters significant quantities of carbon. This is a complex issue and I need to refer you to my proposal for the technical details.

The proposal outlines a plan where Australia can help developing countries stabilize their emissions while still growing their economies and reducing poverty. This would remove the great impasse in the global climate change scene.

China is a lead country in the developing world and if China were to adopt this technology the other developing countries would rapidly follow. I hope that the importance of giving developing countries the technology so they can willingly enter into a global agreement on climate change is obvious.

I have been working with the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Science on how to introduce this technology to China. We have agreed on a research plan on how this could be applied to China and particularly to provide the scientific verification required for carbon trading. They need \$500,000 to undertake this research and I am asking the Australian Government to provide this funding to the Academy.

The justifications for this expenditure are simple.

1) Carbon is global; the impact of climate change on Australia is largely the result of overseas emissions. \$500,000 to help developing countries curb their emissions is insignificant in comparison with the costs we are already experiencing from climate change, drought, floods and bush fires. It is a good investment.

2) It would be by far the most cost effective way for the Australian Government to reduce global emissions. This \$500,000 helping China would have far more impact in reducing emissions than the much larger sums we are already investing within Australia.

3) The essential, fully international, global agreement on climate change is highly unlikely unless the needs of the developing countries are satisfied. Enabling developing countries to sequester carbon removes this impasse and makes agreement between developing and developed countries more achievable.

4) Australia's prosperity is largely based on its energy exports of coal and gas. We have moral and self interest obligations to help reduce the impact.

5) It would develop a significant supply of carbon offsets which would help protect our energy industry from future restrictions.

6) A significant supply of carbon offsets would ensure that the price of carbon would be held in check making it much easier to introduce a carbon trading scheme.

6) Before the last election many people felt ashamed of Australia's stance on climate change and voted for Kevin Rudd to get action on climate change. These people felt let down when climate change was relegated to the too hard basket. Action now, to support this project, would help restore the Government's image on climate change, both overseas and with the electorate.

These reasons justify the investment based on self interest; however above all it is the right thing to do.

While I have focused on reducing emissions in China as my first priority I see this approach will automatically flow back to Australia. China is now the world's largest emitter of greenhouse gases; it also has a large agricultural work force which can readily adopt the technology. Other developing countries will follow China's enabling a global agreement. Introducing a trading scheme into Australia will be so much easier once this international agreement has been reached.

Colin Austin