

Brief Submission to the Climate Change Authority – 28th November 2013

Submitted by:

Dr Ian McGregor

Adviser to the Government of Afghanistan at the UNFCCC Climate Negotiations

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Submission as to why Australia has to do a lot more than indicated in draft CCA Report

The latest climate science, IPCC and other reports, indicate that to keep global temperatures well below 2C above pre-industrial levels we are going to have to leave 80% of currently known reserves of fossil fuels in the ground and reduce global emissions to close to zero by 2050.

Australia has been putting off moving to this required path for decades. It fought for a very soft Kyoto emission reduction target due to its dependence on fossil fuels. Burning fossil fuels is the major cause of the problem not an excuse for inaction.

Australia needs to start moving rapidly from a high emission economy to a low emission economy before this is forced upon it by the mitigation commitments which will be required by the Paris Protocol of the UNFCCC to be finalised in Paris in 2015 and to come into force in 2020. By any measure, Australia has high historic responsibility for global warming (high historic and current per capita emissions), high capacity to implement change (high gdp per capita) so its fair share of a global agreement to move the world to the rapid emission reduction path needed to keep warming well below 2C above pre-industrial levels.

The country that I advise at the UNFCCC negotiations, Afghanistan, is one of the Least Developed Country group – those countries that have contributed least to global warming (low historic and current emissions) and have the least capacity (extremely low GDP per capita) to implement a Low Emission Development Path and fund the Adaptation to the global warming that high emitting countries like Australia has already caused. This represents about 1C of warming above pre-industrial levels, once the lag effect of current emissions is taken into account.

Bangladesh, the most populous of the LDCs, with over 150 million people, is already suffering greatly from climate change with increased flooding and erosion of farming land in the delta due to increased glacial melt and increased damage due to rising sea levels and more severe storm surges. Unlike Australia, Bangladesh lacks the funds to cope with these impacts from climate change and to adapt to the warmer world that Australia and the high emitting countries have caused and continue to contribute to at an alarming rate. Australia's emissions have risen since the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was opened for signing at the Rio Earth Summit more than 20 years ago. Under the UNFCCC agreement, Australia's emissions were supposed to stabilise by the year 2000 and then start reducing. As we all know, unlike the EU's emissions which are now almost 20% below 1990 levels, Australia's emissions have continued and do continue to rise.

It is clear therefore that not only the Government's current target of a 5% reduction by 2020 is woefully inadequate but also that the draft Climate Change Authority Report to the Australian Government substantially understates what Australia's fair share of global emission reductions should be. I urge you to go back and look at my original submission which makes clear that Australia's emission reduction target by 2020 should be approximately 40% below 1990 levels.

An emission reduction target of that magnitude would also put Australia on the path to ceasing to be a fossil fuel driven economy, a task it has to complete urgently as part of the global effort needed to stop using fossil fuels entirely by 2050 in order to leave a planet at a tolerable temperature for the 9 billion people who will live on Earth by 2050 and their children and their children's children.

Thank you in anticipation of your giving my submission appropriate consideration in your deliberations. If you require further information, I am currently overseas but can be contacted by email and can be involved in interactive discussion via skype.