



Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) Quaker Earthcare Committee

Submission to the Australian Government Climate Change Authority Caps and Targets Review

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission. We believe that it is very important to have an independent authority to provide expert advice on climate warming. We respectfully wish to make the following points.

The science-related aspects of global emissions budgets, pointing to the overall level of emissions.

There is plenty of evidence that climate warming is a real and substantial threat to human life on Earth. The most recent is the *Consensus Statement from Global Scientists*¹. We are saddened that the 1992 *World Scientists' Warning to Humanity* has been ignored². Although a limit of 2°C warming is accepted as a target, we note that with 1°C warming, adverse effects are now being experienced, and that considerable damage will occur with 2°C and more warming. It is most probably now too late to intervene to reduce global warming to below 4°C.

The reductions required to limit warming to 2 degrees.

The ecological systems essential for human life are in significant decay. Climate warming is part of that degradation, and hence successful policy initiatives for climate warming need to recognise that related global drivers such as water, toxins, human population growth, energy, are part of the picture. In preparing emissions reduction goals the Authority needs to be aware that a narrow focus on emissions reduction alone is unlikely to be effective because of the multi-causal nature and effect of climate warming.

Approaches to sharing global emissions budgets among nations and the extent and nature of international action to reduce emissions.

The international initiatives to deal with climate warming globally have failed to date. We therefore believe that it is imperative that Australians plan to mitigate and adapt to climate warming regardless of what other countries are doing, in order to prepare ourselves for the substantial and detrimental physical, social and economic changes that are coming.

Where other countries are seriously attempting to reduce their emissions, we should help them, including, when appropriate, through aid programmes. We should make efforts to work closely with Indonesia and other Pacific and Asian countries, as they will likely provide many future climate refugees that will seek haven in Australia.

The economic and social implications of different emissions reduction goals for Australia.

a) Economic implications. Garnaut has argued for an emissions trading scheme within a market-based approach³. We support the use of pricing mechanisms, but

¹ <http://mahb.stanford.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Consensus-Statement.pdf>

² <http://www.ucsusa.org/about/1992-world-scientists.html>

³ Garnaut, Ross. (2011). *The Garnaut Review 2011*. CUP.

within an economic system that is consistent with the Laws of Thermodynamics. Such economic tools are necessary but not sufficient. We would favour the efficiency of a carbon tax. It has worked well in Ireland within a short term perspective ⁴, although the motivation there has been because of their dire economic circumstances. It was comprehensive and the Government was committed. Industry, including the car industry, responded and there has been a 15% drop in emissions. Whatever pricing system is chosen for Australia, it is important that it be comprehensive. We also believe that a rapid transition to renewable energy is essential, through such means as feed-in-tariff mechanisms, as well as substantial programmes for energy efficiency. These factors apply to whatever reduction goals are chosen.

However, we see such a pricing policy as being transitional and short term. Such success needs to be placed in a wider context of other global drivers, and the fact that the current economy is not consistent with modern scientific principles. In particular, commitment to a growth economy is in contradiction to an economy that can successfully limit emissions.

Beinhocker in *The Origin of Wealth* has described how Walras, Jevons and other economists in the nineteenth century developed traditional economics based on the science of that time. Unfortunately, traditional economics has not adjusted to many of the major advances in scientific thinking since then. He also tells the story of Reed, CEO of Citicorp, being disillusioned with economics during the 1980's global financial crisis. Reed supported the Santa Fe Institute initiatives for an interdisciplinary approach involving both scientists and economists, but this showed how unscientific traditional economics remains ⁵, and how unreliable use of such a model is for realistic predictions of future economic behaviour. Beinhocker is one of a number of economists who have drawn attention to the incompatibility of modern science and traditional economics. This includes the Quaker economist, Kenneth Boulding, in his 1966 essay *The Economics of the Coming Spaceship Earth* ⁶.

Hence the economic implications of any serious programme to reduce emissions are that a different economic approach is necessary. It has to recognise the constraints that the laws of science impose on an economic system that aims to be realistic. The setting of targets and choosing means for capping emissions need to be placed within a wider initiative to move away from a solely market based approach. While this matter may be beyond the scope of the Authority, acknowledgement needs to be made that without this change any effort to deal with emissions will be compromised and not sustainable.

b) Social Implications. Whatever reduction goals are chosen, any effective programme to reduce emissions needs to recognise that along with a different economic approach a different ethic is required that will influence the social nature of Australian society. Traditional economics also adopted the Utilitarian ethics of the day. They saw the earth's resources as being of utility for human use within the calculation of the greatest benefit for the greatest number of people. Utilitarianism joined the other philosophical and ethical schools that primarily deal with human-human relations. It is only in recent years that philosophers from the traditional

⁴ <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/28/science/earth/in-ireland-carbon-taxes-pay-off.html?pagewanted=all>

⁵ Beinhocker, Eric D. (2006). *The Origin of Wealth*. Harvard Business School Press.

⁶ http://arachnid.biosci.utexas.edu/courses/THOC/Readings/Boulding_SpaceshipEarth.pdf

streams have extended their ethics to include human-Earth factors through such concepts as respect for nature ⁷.

Quakers have been part of the many religions that also focused on human-human relations. Anne Adams in introducing an anthology of Quaker writing on earthcare stated that

there is a huge gap in Quaker writing about the earth between the seventeenth and late twentieth centuries (apart from the remarkable John Woolman in the eighteenth) ⁸.

But during the last 30-40 years, Quakers have been reassessing this. In 2008 Australian Quakers agreed to a Quaker Earthcare Statement ⁹ that acknowledges the need to care for, repair and sustain the Earth.

The Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale has documented that this shift by Quakers is part of a movement of many religions worldwide that are moving from exclusively anthropocentric ethics to ecocentric ethics and even to anthropocosmic ethics ¹⁰.

We therefore recommend to the Authority that if it is to provide policy options for emissions reduction compatible with modern scientific principles, then it is necessary to move away from a growth economy. What will also be required is a move towards ethical principles that include human-Earth dimensions. The latter will have major social implications for our current style and patterns of living.

Phillip Toyne, Convenor, Quaker Earthcare Committee
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⁷ See for example Gardiner, S et al (2010) Climate Ethics: Essential Readings. OUP.

⁸ Adams, A. 1996. The Creation Was Open To Me. Quaker Green Concern. Suffolk: Lavenham Press.

⁹ <http://www.quakers.org.au/displaycommon.cfm?an=1&subarticlenbr=296>

¹⁰ <http://fore.research.yale.edu/about-us/>