



# POLITICAL SOLUTIONS TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Policies current 23 July 2010, check the LHMU website for updates

## JULIA GILLARD AND THE ALP HAVE:



- Recognised climate change as “the most dangerous long-term threat to Australia’s prosperity” and “the biggest social and economic challenge of our generation”.
- Committed to reducing Australia’s emissions by between 5% and 25% by 2020, and 60% by 2050 (based on 2000 levels).
- Signed on to the global Kyoto agreement – an international environmental treaty ratified by 185 countries, aimed at stabilising greenhouse gasses to prevent dangerous climate change.
- Expanded the Renewable Energy Target so that 20% of Australia’s electricity will come from renewable energy sources by 2020.

- Committed \$5.1 billion to the growth of clean energy jobs and technologies – in particular low-emission coal and solar. This includes \$652 million for a renewable energy fund.
- Committed to establish an independent, expert Climate Change Commission.
- Committed to establish a Citizens’ Assembly to examine and debate climate change policy, and help build a community consensus.
- Committed up to \$1 billion over 10 years to new sources of renewable energy – including solar, geothermal and wave power.

- Established the \$1.5 billion Solar Flagships Program to support the development of large-scale solar generation plants.
- Committed to working towards the introduction of a price on carbon in 2013.
- Implemented a \$12.9 billion national water strategy to improve water use, manage the Murray Darling and fund desalination plants and research.
- Committed \$30 million over 2 years for an information campaign on climate change.
- Committed \$200 million to the Great Barrier Reef Rescue initiative.
- Assisted households to improve energy efficiency and signed the National Strategy on Energy Efficiency with all States and Territories Governments.
- Established the \$427 million National Solar Schools Plan.
- Committed \$100 million to develop a new ‘smart grid’ energy network.
- Established the \$1.3 billion Green Car Innovation Fund.



## PUTTING A PRICE ON CARBON

Putting a price on carbon pollution is an important part of the solution to climate change. This means that the cost of pollution will be paid by those who produce it, instead of the environment. The higher cost of pollution will encourage companies and individuals to be energy efficient and reduce their pollution. A price on carbon will also make solutions like solar and wind power cheaper.

One way to put a price on carbon is through a 'cap and trade' emissions trading scheme. This would place a 'cap' on Australian emissions – a limit on pollution that will be reduced in future years. The capped emissions would then be traded as 'carbon pollution permits'. These permits would become more expensive as the cap is reduced.

The Labor government planned to introduce an emissions trading scheme in 2009, and legislation was passed by the House of Representatives. However the legislation was rejected in the Senate by the Liberals (who wanted no scheme) and the Greens (who wanted a stronger scheme).

Another way to put a price on carbon would be through an interim carbon levy – as proposed by Professor Ross Garnaut and the Greens. This would start quickly and have a fixed price for permits.

The money raised through putting a price on carbon will be used to transition Australian households and businesses to a low pollution future, and to help people on low incomes adjust to prices rises.

The ALP and the Greens are both committed to putting a price on carbon. The Liberals are not in favour of putting a price on carbon.



Photo: David Clarke

## TONY ABBOTT AND THE LIBERAL / NATIONAL PARTY COALITION



- If elected, Tony Abbott would only aim to cut emissions by 5% by 2020 (on 1990 levels), and only spend \$3.2 billion on fighting climate change.
- Abbott's plan would rely mainly on sequestering carbon in the soil, and planting trees to reduce Australia's carbon emissions. This is despite the fact that soil carbon is not recognised in international carbon accounting. It is also highly unlikely that changes in farming and tree planting could outweigh the growing pollution from burning coal.
- Abbott would focus on rewarding positive actions by polluting companies, rather than imposing any disincentives. Businesses would not be penalised for continuing to operate at 'business as usual' levels. Many polluting companies would be subsidised – even coal-fired power stations would be eligible for funding if they burned coal more efficiently.
- Abbott's plan does not place an overall cap on emissions for heavy-polluting industries.
- A number of senior Liberals have openly denied the science of climate change, including Liberal leader Tony Abbott who once described the concept of climate change as "absolute crap".<sup>1</sup> Nick Minchin (Leader of the Liberals in the Senate) said that the majority of the Liberal party do not believe that humans are the main cause of global warming.<sup>2</sup>
- The former Coalition government under John Howard was one of the only governments in the world that refused to ratify the Kyoto Protocol.
- The Howard government invested only \$3.5 billion to address climate change, over the whole 11 years they were in government.



## THE AUSTRALIAN GREENS



### THE GREENS BELIEVE THAT

- Climate change poses the greatest threat to our world in human history and requires urgent local, national and global action.
- We have only 10-15 years to address the crisis and prevent catastrophe.
- Equity must be at the core of climate change measures, and the cost of reducing greenhouse emissions and adapting to climate change must be distributed fairly.

### THE GREENS PROPOSE:

- Cutting Australia's greenhouse gas emissions by 40% by 2020 (on 1990 levels) and achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.
- Raising the Renewable Energy Target to 30% of Australia's energy needs by 2020.
- Stopping any new coal-fired power stations and new coal mines.
- Developing a plan to assist affected communities to transition away from dependence on coal mining and coal-fired power stations.
- Raising investment in public transport and removing the GST on public transport.
- An interim levy on carbon – a two-year \$23 carbon tax to start immediately.

## AROUND THE WORLD



Photo David Clarke

- The UK has already reduced its emissions by around 15% on 1990 levels, and is aiming for 34% cut by 2020 and 80% by 2050.
- The European Union has committed to an unconditional cut in emissions of 20% below 1990 levels by 2020 and will go to 30% if substantial action is taken by rest of the world.
- In the US, President Obama has proposed an emissions trading scheme and a reduction in emissions by 14% by 2020 (on 2005 levels). The legislation has yet to pass Congress.
- The US State of California has legislation and regulation that supports clean cars, renewable energy and puts stringent caps on big polluting industries. Their goal is to reduce their emissions back to 1990 levels by 2020.
- China and India both aim to substantially cut emissions intensity, increase renewable energy and improve energy efficiency. In China, more than 17% of energy already comes from renewables.
- Japan has announced 25% cuts to emissions by 2020 (on 1990 levels).



## FIGHTING FIRE WITH FIRE

As a Senior Fire fighter with the Northern Territory Fire and Rescue Service, LHMU member Duncan Stitfold knows about the dangers of climate change.

"I've responded to all sorts of calls – grass fires, structure fires, vehicle fires. And I've trained in urban search and rescue because we're in a cyclone zone. A lot of Darwin and the Top End is also not much above sea level. So we've got a lot to lose if the impacts of climate change are realised – more fires, more intense tropical storms and a rising sea level."

That's why Duncan signed up to be a Union Climate Connector and to take his political fire to the politicians in Canberra.

"The trip to Canberra was pretty new for me. I've never done anything like that before.

"I've done a lot of reading and believe in the science of climate change. And I know that we need to make changes urgently. It's very basic science to understand that we can't keep altering the ratios of atmospheric gases and at the same time reducing the Earth's natural coping systems forever without negative impacts. If we continue to put that much pollution into the air, and clearing land, it's going to have an effect.

"So when I got the email from Union Climate Connectors about going to Canberra I decided to give it a go. I've already made changes at home, like installing a grid connected solar power system and energy efficient appliances, and reducing our households' consumption and waste. I have planted a native garden and we buy local produce when we can, and walk or ride instead of driving when possible. But I want to see our politicians make bigger changes to tackle climate change. I've got two young kids - my girl is 2 years old,

and my boy is 5. I worry about their future. My young fella already understands about solar power, and knows that we should switch off any power whenever we're not using it. Both of them can recognise and name plants, and the birds and animals that use them, in our area. All of which could become threatened by climate change. I wanted to represent my family in Canberra."

Duncan and the other Union Climate Connectors went through training and then had meetings with dozens of members of parliament. They told the politicians about their concerns about climate change as workers, and demanded that the government invest in good green jobs.

"By the end of each meeting the politicians agreed that action was necessary and that clean energy jobs are a growth area that should be prioritised."

However not all politicians agreed to meet with the union members – many Liberal and National Party members refused.

"It seemed like the Liberals are in disarray – full of climate change deniers. I think the deniers should still be pro changes and climate action. Clean energy is a growth sector for the economy and the risk of being proven wrong and of inaction is just too high"

Overall the lobbying day was a great success.

"I think the Union Climate Connector lobbying day had a big impact. As everyday union members, it seemed like we were the only unpaid people there on the day. Most of the lobbyists are on the payroll of big business. The thing that impressed me most in Canberra was all the union members I met who are doing lots of great campaigning on climate change. I was proud to be a part of that."



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Connector at**

**[www.climateconnectors.org](http://www.climateconnectors.org)**