

SUBMISSION

TO THE

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON

CLIMATE CHANGE, ENVIRONMENT

AND WATER

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Dear Dr Jaireth,

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this inquiry into Greenhouse Gas Reduction Targets for the Australian Capital Territory. I hope you will all enjoy the perspective I offer.

My name is Cindy Eiritz, I am a 37 year old married mother of two living in Duffy, who only became active in trying to reduce carbon pollution 18 months ago. Like most Australians, I had been hearing about climate change for a while. Despite this, I had no real comprehension of exactly how much carbon pollution I was personally responsible for because I did not perceive that I had the time, energy or knowledge to be able to start.

In November 2007, I went to a Climate Change Public Meeting held at one of our local schools by some local residents inspired by Bob Douglas's SEE Change vision. This got me motivated. I became keen to learn how I could make the biggest achievable reductions in the easiest possible way. I was fortunate enough to be able to attend an education initiative of ACT Otherwise, an ACT Government funded initiative hosted by the Conservation Council. Peter Miller, an inspiring gentleman who was a member of the ACT Government funded Home Energy Advice Team led the session. He supported us to learn about where our household emissions came from and what we could do about it.

Over the past twelve months, my family and I have made significant sacrifices to reduce our own carbon pollution. After learning that 61% of emissions from the average Canberra household is caused by heating, we pledged to each other that we would not turn our heater on (and would instead wear jumpers). For us this was a really difficult thing to do in zero degree temperatures but happily, it was worth it. When we got our gas bill we discovered we had reduced our pollution output by 70% compared to the same quarter of the previous year! Imagine our sense of joy and achievement - we celebrated.

There are many, many other steps we have started taking. These include re-building a home vegetable garden to reduce the 40% of our ecological footprint that we have learnt comes from food. We are very proud of all these endeavours, but I really want to tell you more about what I have learnt...

After all our efforts to reduce our emissions, I then learnt that household pollution ONLY accounts for 18% of national emissions! After all that fuss! In recent years, all we have heard about is how bad we are for not switching off our light bulbs, etc, etc. And yet, the carbon pollution reduction effect achievable through lighting is a miniscule part of a percent of the national emissions problem! 82% of emissions can only be impacted upon if our governments take responsibility. And yet, as ordinary citizens in our households, we continue to make ourselves anxious and unwell, stressing out over lights and appliance switches.

I find it quite distressing that both the Territory and Federal governments have spent so much time, money and effort shifting the weight of this problem from their own shoulders to that of us, the people.

I feel quite sure that all this was never consciously intended to be as malicious imposition on our collective conscience. However, it is awfully useful it is that we, the people, are so burdened trying to reduce our own comparatively small carbon pollution, whilst industry rolls on. This leaves polluting businesses and the fossil fuel lobby free to blind the government's vision of possible alternate futures. In consequence, we are all robbed of the possibility of lighter footprints and renewable power for both base load grids and exports.

Both Territory's and the Federal government's unfair emphasis on us as householders makes me very angry. As an ordinary Australian, I, and most people I who I converse with and share the facts, feel let down by our governments. Moreover, witnessing the new Federal Government disintegrates from idealism to pandering to the whims and demands of the self-proclaimed fossil fuel mafia breaks my heart.

I believe that being an Australian is all about a fair go for all. In the current circumstance, it seems that we, the citizens, are being let down because you, the politicians, are not being supported and protected from powerful vested interests. Just as climate stress is real for you, it is debilitating us as well.

Many ordinary Australians are becoming anxious, distressed and losing hope because we do not have a robust transition plan to help tackle this problem. I agree we all need to do our bit, but we also desperately need our governments to do their bit. Please see that it is not fair that we are all feeling guilty each time we leave a light on, when our governments are selling our future off to unscrupulous corporations.

It must be awfully difficult for politicians at all levels to find the strength to rise above the thinly veiled bullying perpetrated by powerful vested interests. I wonder what we, the people, might be able to do to better support you and your peers in your difficult jobs.

We, collectively, solved the CFC problem thanks to the leadership of governments of the world. I believe that it is possible for us to do this again. We have proof that fossils fuels are damaging our atmosphere layers, and we have proof that we have the capability to build renewables. What we now need to prove is that we can all work together to evoke the largest and most expedient cultural adaptation ever known to mankind. Myself and my many friends throughout the sustainability net are all keen to work with you do this.

Yours sincerely,

Cindy Eiritz

REVIEWING THE OPPORTUNITY

BACKGROUND

Current Situation. Consensus policies at national and international level are resulting in lowest common denominator results, when we need the strongest possible commitments. Similarly, with the global deliberations, populations who take responsibility to actively reducing their ecological footprints and transitioning their energy supplies will inspire others with the hope of what is possible.

Unique Opportunity. Canberra and ACT are in a unique position to be a pilot, inspiring others on how communities can come together to make the biggest possible difference in the quickest possible period of time. The city/state nature of our existence, our education and affluence and the notable absence of polluting industry make this eminently achievable.

Responsibility. We need to accept responsibility to do as much as possible to inspire action at national and global level. By the community engaging more comprehensively we can help to generate the political will required to give both our Territory and our Federal Governments a mandate to act more decisively on Climate Change.

STATEMENT OF FACT AND BEST WAY FORWARD

Interdependent Nature of All Things. There is a direct relationship between the ACT's legislated target and policy and measures agreed to and implemented at a national level.

Legislative Commitment. All legislation, locally and nationally, needs to mandate 'Environmentally Effective Targets' thereby enabling the actual figure to be amended in light of science confirming changes. This wording is clear and unambiguous, thereby stopping emotive arguments about actual figures. After all, who in their right mind is going to argue for the opposite 'that we don't want environmentally effective targets'.

TARGETS LOCALLY AND NATIONALLY

Actual Targets for ACT. Given our affluence, education and concern here in the ACT, there is no reason why we should not aim to become completely carbon neutral by 2020:

- a. **2010 : Date for the peaking of greenhouse gas emissions in the ACT.** Stabilisation must occur as soon as possible, we are already 30 years late - we need to commit to act NOW!
- b. **30% : Target for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in the ACT by 2012.** Let's get serious about this. Awareness levels are high and people are committed to act.
- c. **Beyond Zero by 2020 : Target for the reduction of ACT greenhouse gas emissions by 2020.** ACT should aim to reduce carbon emissions by 10% each year, predominantly by supporting people and businesses to transition to distributed renewable energy economy.

SUPPORTING FEDERAL GOVERNMENT ACTION

Federal Government Policy. The ACT Government needs to help the Federal Government realise that the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS) Bill 2009 is a flawed piece of legislation. Passing this law, unamended, will lock Australia into dangerously low targets. Science has comprehensively demonstrated that inadequate targets will unlock feedback mechanisms (eg. melting of the perma frost) that will trigger run-away climate change.

Specific Flaws. The current CPRS Bill is worse than doing nothing - it will also preclude more effective policies. Entrenching the 'right to pollute' as property sets a dangerous precedence in a world that needs to start drawing down carbon out of the atmosphere now. Even worse, the scheme violates its own 'polluter pays' principle by its provision of free permits and extensive corporate compensation. The saddest aspect of the CPRS legislation is that it undermines community emission reduction efforts.

Turning Weakness into Strength. Most people are acutely conscious of the need to transition to more sustainable living and yet CPRS legislation punishes us for reducing our household emissions by letting the fossil fuel industry pollute more! Conversely, bringing communities together around transitioning to zero carbon could be a fantastic nation building activity for the current times. Building renewable green industries is an ideal counter to the current economic woes. And together we could build the political will needed for Jon Stanhope and Kevin Rudd to be the leaders they aspire to be. It would be a historic achievement if we can support you and your government to deliver ambitious carbon reduction targets backed up by effective measures to achieve them.

SOCIAL EQUITY PRIORITIES

Local Issues. There can be no question that investment in supporting disadvantaged people needs to be the priority for expenditure in the first years of any program. Certainly, there can be no equity in providing social welfare if our most vulnerable people are left trying to survive in current housing stock. Much of this has inadequate capacity to manage the extreme of Canberra weather without the capacity and these people have difficult accessing quality food for their families.

Local Opportunities. There are simple things that can be done to dwellings to significantly improve health outcomes of poor families. Similarly, there are easy skill shares that can be enacted that can greatly improve both capacity and quality of life for some of those struggling hardest in our communities. These cost little, in the scheme of things, but bode highly in the measure of who we are as a society.

Acceptability of Local and Offshore Offsets. Local and offshore offsets should be encouraged as part of our commitment as global citizens, at least until such time as our energy systems can transition. This monetary investment can have exponential effects in the world system of carbon reduction. There are many inspired sustainable communities in other countries that have highly advanced social, cultural and ecological technology that is of tremendous value. These peoples can help us learn how to live simpler, more ecologically sustainable lives. Could it be possible for us to share more of our resources to help support them? This could form the basis to protect their (and our - globally) precious carbon banks and ecosystems.

MONITORING, REPORTING AND REVIEW PROCESSES

The Need. The adequacy of existing data collection and methodology for monitoring and reporting purposes needs to be comprehensively examined as soon as possible. Individual households and companies must be enabled to monitor their own progress to reduce emissions and increase renewable generation. This can then aggregate data for the whole of ACT. The Green Institute is developing a web-based Butterfly Atlas of Climate Mitigation and Adaptation which has these objectives. The government should investigate the potential for linking into this national monitoring and reporting scheme.

KEY THOUGHTS ON CURRENT RESPONSE TO CLIMATE CHANGE

INITIAL ANALYSIS NEEDED

Efficacy of Existing Programs. A comprehensive critical analysis of existing programs within the current ACT Climate Change Strategy, Weathering the Change, needs to be urgently conducted. The key question that needs to be asked is:

If all the money that has been spent on conducting and administering programs over the past years had been channelled into subsidising renewable energy ... then how much more actual emission reductions could have been achieved?

Some Other Key Questions. The analysis needs to confirm how much the 73% of our ACT emissions coming from homes, offices, et al has been reduced through money spent. Could it be possible to reduce ACT emissions by 73% within a decade merely by redirecting funds into co-creating an increased market demand for distributed renewable energy? Despite our awareness, concern and affluence, less than 5% of Canberrans have Green Power or Solar. Could citizen investment into this sort of power generation be expedited by removing the perverse disincentive of black power being cheaper than green power? Do citizens actually know that some sources of green power can cost half the price of others

Ensuring Effectiveness. Government needs to ensure the highest possible emission reduction result for each taxpayer dollar spent. Emphasis must be placed on moving past comparatively small scale 'feel good' programs to transformational initiatives, such as community owned distributed renewable power generation infrastructure. Further, could the government work with energy providers to:

- o address the perverse disincentive that currently results in black power being cheaper than green,
- o co-create a public awareness initiative that builds understanding and trust in how investment in green power is managed, and
- o expand initiatives where community groups can receive a commission for helping members and others to change to green power.

LOCATING HIGHEST VALUE TARGETS

Optimising Possible Outcomes. A further question to be considered could be:

Are we achieving the greatest possible amount of emission reduction in the least possible period of time providing the best possible value for time, money and other resources invested?

Co-creating Exponential Optimisation. This analysis needs to consider the possibility of how much more could be achieved by moving away from individual incentives to initiatives where conduits start a multiple impact effect. Could government funds for individual initiatives, which provide minimal reductions to a minute percentage of people be redirected to concurrently fund the physical infrastructure. Further, might it be possible to invest in the social infrastructure required to help motivated people to help other exponentially engage in climate mitigation and adaptation initiatives.

Expanding Programs. The potential of the ACT to be a functional working pilot that can inspire other communities regionally, nationally and globally needs to come to the fore. Philip Sutton believes that one scalable model that engages citizens in being able to quickly generate the political will needed for government to be able to act to transition power supplies. It is possible that this could expedite global adaptation by as much as five years, saving millions of lives of people and species in vulnerable and threatened places. We could be the difference we wish to see.

INTRODUCING POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS

COMMUNITY INITIATED ADAPTATION

One Possible Vision. Human adaptation can be used as a vehicle to inspire the restorative revival of more resilient communities here in the ACT. Responding to climate change can become a rewarding community building endeavour that re-connects the social fabric within our suburbs as an optimised climate adaptation initiative. One possible vision where AUSINDUSTY could jointly fund an initiative through the Climate Ready Grant is at Annex A. It would be appreciated if this particular Annex could be kept in-confidence for the time being. This is required to respect to work of the myriad of incredible people who have expressed interest in collaborating in such an initiative.

Summary of Some Key Resources. The Home Energy Advice Team Program should be extended to become a community engagement strategy utilising the myriad of resources available. Some of the many profound people and programs that have thought deeply about the possibilities are include at Annex B.

Actual Pilot Project. Some key people here locally in the ACT are being supported to help the local community start a Transition 10 initiative here in the ACT. Transition 10 is a program that is being developed by the Sustainable Living Foundation and partners. It aims to engage people, organisations and communities around Australia in a transition decade (2009-2019) to achieve a safe climate economy. A range of organisations throughout Australia are interested in collaborating on this.

National Linkages. The program will develop a manual to guide individuals and organisations through the preparation of their own 'Transition 10' plan of action. A shared publicity program will raise awareness about T10 and publicly promote the T10 actions of the participants around Australia. This T10 program will 'connect the dots' between transition town programs, efforts to achieve 100% renewables by 2020 and zero emissions/CO2 drawdown economies.

TEN STEPS FOR TRANSITION

One Possible View. One possible view of the ten steps individuals can be guided by in their homes and businesses is outlined below. It is expected the wider collaborative team will use this as a basis for further evolution of the possibilities of how to co-create the best possible effect most expediently.

1. **Engage.** Engage with other like-minded people who care about people and our planet.
2. **Xchange.** Share interest and thoughts about what we can do
3. **Commit.** Together commit to reducing carbon pollution
4. **Encourage.** Encourage each other to change over to 100% green power or solar, hopefully with the support by government subsidised initiatives
5. **Live.** Learn about ways to live better while consuming less (50% of eco-footprints are from purchases:
 - re-engaging in low carbon recreation and hobbies,
 - recycling materials and sharing more so as to reduce consumption
6. **Learn.** Learn to dress for our climate, become fitter and take pride in being able to endure temperatures, reduce need for heating and cooling
 - Enjoy co-creating new fashion mores for our city – what fun!
 - o dress warmer in winter - utilise layering technology; and
 - o dress cooler in summer - skip suits and instead wear cooler clothes, short sleeved open neck shirts, et al.
 - Each degree in thermostat can reduce energy usage by 10%
 - o Learn to become fitter and take pride in being able to endure temperatures:
7. **Economise.** Economise comfort needed from temperature control and hot water
 - replace temperature controlled living spaces and long, hot showers and with other activities from which to gain joy and comfort
 - (Halving shower length reduces energy use by 50%)
 - change hot water system to solar and install low flow shower heads
8. **Notice.** Notice when energy is being used unnecessarily:
 - encourage yourself to use low energy options, like clothes lines and kitchen sinks
 - remind yourself to switch off each and everything, when not in use.
9. **Connect.** Connect with and care for the earth and nature:
 - Eat fresh food rather than processed and packaged goods
 - Start your own vegetable patch, optimise the amount of food you can grow in your own garden
 - Buy in season goods at local farmers markets, rather than imported food
 - help care for local native forests, replant carbon banks,
10. **Engage.** Engage with the political process needed to inspire change, support governments to be courageous enough to undertake decisive action.

A ten step view for governments and other organisations is also being develop using Ten M's – manifesto, mediate, message, mandate, measure, mitigate, minimise, monitor, mastery and market.

RECOMMENDED PROGRAMS FOR CONSIDERATION

We must recognise that reducing emissions means learning to live more sustainably, specifically getting back to basics - living better, with less. This Annex describes a few of the treasure trove of programs available. These offer a profound opportunity to support our citizens to partake in a sustainability journey. By supporting and facilitating the engagement of passionate citizens, we can empower and enable them to revive our communities from within. This sort of partnership between government and community encourages us all to take responsibility for the future we will share.

Environmentally conscious citizens engaged in a Transition Ten Race to Sustainability will help co-create the political will all governments require to transform our economies. Some of the many profound people and programs that have thought deeply about possibilities which can interface and compliment these include:

- Unpinning philosophy – Stephen Boyden’s Biosensitive Futures supported by Bob Douglas’s SEE Change Grey Power and Hope and The Australia Institute’s Wellbeing Manifesto
- Specific Goal – Philip Sutton’s Ecologically Sustainable Economy by 2030
- Vehicles – Philip Sutton’s Race to Sustainability, Greenpeace’s Energy (R)evolution, Hugh Saddler and The Australia Institute’s clear vision forward, Australia 21 Collaborations, Giselle Wilkinson and Sustainable Living Foundation’s Mass Mobilisation Strategy, Daryl Taylor and Andrew Wilford’s Global Swarming Strategy
- Main Tools – Rob Hopkins’ Transition Towns
- Means to Develop Facilitators – Global Learning’s Leadership Programs
- Bringing Community Together - Val Brown’s Social Collective Learning
- Building Community – Community at Work, especially Karen Jesson’s Network Meetings
- Actual Programs – Terry White’s Challenge to Change, Australian Conservation Foundation Greenhome Program and Ecological Footprint Calculator, Home Energy Advice Team’s Home Audit Program, Sustainability Advice Teams Business Audit Program, Supergreen Me, Green Precincts, Sustainability Streets, Cooee, SEE Change Eco-footprint Challenge.
- Entry Point – Terry White’s Declaration and Philip Sutton’s Climate Covenant Treaty
- Early Adopters – Global Learning’s enACT, Permacultute ACT, Climate Action Canberra, SEE Change, The Environment and Sustainability Resource Centre, Local Energy Trading Scheme, Get Up
 - Means of Access Community – Citizen’s Advice Bureau can connect with over 3000 local groups.