

ACT Council of P&C Associations Inc.

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Mr/s Meredith Hunter MLA

Chair

Standing Committee on Climate Change, Environment and Water

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INQUIRY INTO THE ACT GREENHOUSE GAS REDUCTION TARGETS THE ACT COUNCIL OF PARENTS & CITIZENS ASSOCIATIONS SUBMISSION

Dear Mr/s Meredith Hunter

On behalf of P&C Council, I would like to provide this submission to the Standing Committee inquiry into the ACT Greenhouse Gas Reduction Targets.

The ACT Council of Parents & Citizens Associations is the peak body representing Parents' and Citizens' Associations (P&Cs) in government primary schools, high schools and secondary colleges in the ACT.

It is a representative organisation whose objectives are to foster a quality public education system, to provide support services for affiliates, and to make representations to the government on behalf of parents/carers in government schools. It plays a particularly important role in promoting parent participation in schools and the system as a whole.

Council's submission to this inquiry is based on consultations with P&C Associations and Council's formalised policy on sustainability in schools.

The attachment to this letter sets out the points we would like to put forward in line with the terms of reference for the inquiry.

Council delegates Diane Johnson, Vivienne Pearce and myself, Elizabeth Singer are willing to appear before the Standing Committee.

Please contact me on 6230 1660 or 0420 302 017 if you have any questions about this submission.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Elizabeth Singer
President

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ACT Council of Parents & Citizens Associations Inc. Submission

Enquiry into Greenhouse Gas Reduction Targets

ACT Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on Climate Change, Environment and Water

Summary

The ACT Council of Parents & Citizens Associations argues that schools are ideal places to practise and teach environmental awareness and demonstrate and learn sustainable principles. Schools can be models and leaders within their community to show how society can have a more sustainable and low carbon future. ACT Council of Parents & Citizens Associations is committed to pursuing strategies that minimise the impact of human activities on Earth. We are committed to increasing the level of sustainability and environmental awareness in schools through education curriculum and in implementing ecologically sustainable practices in schools.

Introduction:

ACT Council of Parents & Citizens Associations believes that in a world of limited natural resources and increasing population that responsible use of natural resources and the reduction of Greenhouse emissions to reduce mankind's impact on the planet is sensible and the only course of action for long term sustainability¹.

To this end in November 2008, the ACT Council of Parents & Citizens Associations adopted a Sustainability Policy. (Attachment 1)

The ACT Council of Parents & Citizens Associations argues that sustainability is the process of meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

The present increasing levels of greenhouse gas emissions and associated rise in global temperatures are unsustainable. In fact credible assessments such as Stern, Garnaut and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, (UNFCCC), believe that high-end global warming may produce irreversible catastrophic climatic events. Peer-reviewed scientific analyses

¹ According to the UNFCCC *The average temperature of the earth's surface has risen by 0.74 °C since the late 1800s. It is expected to increase by another 1.8° C to 4° C by the year 2100 - a rapid and profound change - should the necessary action not be taken. Even if the minimum predicted increase takes place, it will be larger than any century-long trend in the last 10,000 years. The principal reason for the mounting thermometer is a century and a half of industrialization: the burning of ever-greater quantities of oil, gasoline, and coal, the cutting of forests, and the practice of certain farming methods. These activities have increased the amount of "greenhouse gases" in the atmosphere, especially carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide. Such gases occur naturally - they are critical for life on earth, they keep some of the sun's warmth from reflecting back into space, and without them the world would be a cold and barren place. But in augmented and increasing quantities, they are pushing the global temperature to artificially high levels and altering the climate. Eleven of the last 12 years are the warmest on record, and 1998 was the warmest year.*
http://unfccc.int/essential_background/feeling_the_heat/items/2917.php (downloaded 9/3/9)

since the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, (IPCC) Fourth Assessment report suggest that observed climate impacts and emission increases are tracking at the very top of, or above, IPCC projections². The needs of future generation are at risk if we do not learn how to reduce greenhouse emissions cause by human activity.

The Garnaut Final Report made clear the costs of inaction will be greater than the costs of responsible mitigation. In addition, the aggregate costs of action are modest, and the benefits of action (and the cost of inaction) increase over time, becoming more pronounced in the second half of this century and beyond.

The ACT Council of Parents & Citizens Associations sees the increased involvement of our schools and their communities as a crucial part of the overall strategy needed to reduce greenhouse gas emission in the ACT.

The ACT Council of Parents & Citizens' Association encourages the consideration of alternative, more creative and sustainable strategies and solutions in addressing issues associated with the physical infrastructure of schools and their surroundings, school activities, the management of schools and their content of the curriculum. In moving towards sustainability, Council is attempting to reduce its own ecological and carbon footprint and that of ACT schools individually and collectively and urges the ACT Government to likewise reduce its own ecological and carbon footprint in all its activities.

Terms of Reference:

The ACT Council of Parents & Citizens Associations will address the Terms of Reference as follows.

Section (2) (a) & (b) of the Terms of Reference being:

That the ACT Assembly

(2) resolves that the Standing Committee on Climate Change ,Environment and Water enquire into and report on

(a) an appropriate target to be established in legislation, including:

(i) an appropriate date for the peaking of greenhouse gas emissions in the ACT

(ii) an appropriate target for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in the ACT by 2012;

(iii) an appropriate target for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in the ACT by 2020;

(b) appropriate monitoring, reporting and review processes to accompany the target;

The ACT Council of Parents & Citizens Associations does not currently hold a policy on specific greenhouse gas reduction targets, and peaking date.

² CANA ibid

Section (2) (c) of the Terms of Reference being:

That the ACT Assembly

(2) resolves the Standing Committee on Climate Change ,Environment and Water enquire into and report on:

Part (c) the following associated with achieving the greenhouse gas reduction target:

(i) the efficacy of existing programs within the current ACT Climate Change Strategy Weathering the Change, and the need for additional programs in the Strategy;

The ACT Department of Education and Training needs to actively and creatively encourage the participation of **all** ACT schools (both government and non-government) in government initiatives regarding sustainability. A current example is the federally funded Australian Sustainable Schools Initiative (AuSSI)³ and the National Solar Schools Program (NSSP)⁴. The ACT Council of Parents & Citizens Associations is encouraged by the results that have been achieved to date by schools that have signed to the AuSSI.

All ACT schools need to improve their curriculum, school management and physical infrastructure in the areas of energy use, waste, water, biodiversity and landscape design. This would reduce the carbon footprint of schools but more importantly educate the school community so they can carry out similar strategies at home and in the workplace.

To achieve a reduced ecological and carbon footprint, the ACT Council of Parents & Citizens Associations urges the ACT Government to **enhance these programs** by:

(1) providing specific funding directed to professional development for teachers in the area of environmental sustainability.

Teachers are the catalyst of change in a school and the students can be a catalyst for change in the community and can lead communities to a greener future. Making professional development easier to access in this area will help speed the uptake of ideas and practices related to sustainability and greenhouse reduction in schools.

(2) providing specific funding for a **dedicated position** in the ACT Department of Education and Training to promote sustainability in our public schools through curriculum development and through green programs. This is another driver to speed change in our schools and as a consequence to the broader community

(3) providing sufficient new funds in addition to federal programs to schools to make the transition to sustainability achievable. Particularly in older schools, help is needed to update old infrastructure and management systems.

(4) promoting the development of suitable, sustainable curriculum at the college level, incorporating local resources as has been done in the junior curriculum. The government needs to provide tangible assistance to teachers and school to help the faster implementation of new sustainable curriculum.

³ <http://www.sustainableschools.act.gov.au/schools>

⁴ <http://www.environment.gov.au/settlements/renewable/nationalsolarschools/>

(5) providing funding for vocational and emerging 'green industry' VET courses in addition to curriculum choices already offered to senior students.

(ii) the ACT's future energy supplies, taking account of the draft ACT Government Energy Strategy due to be published in late 2008 and options for sourcing or producing sufficient renewable energy to meet the needs of the ACT;

(2) Energy consumption could be reduced if all schools were encouraged to reduce, reuse, repair and recycle resources. Student should be encouraged to follow similar strategies at home.

(3) Schools should be helped financially by government to buy locally produced or 'green' products with reduced packaging and transportation, where possible lowering food and product kilometres.

(iii) Climate change impacts on the sustainability of existing ecological communities;

The ACT Council of Parents & Citizens Association policy supports:

(1) maintaining and enhancing the integrity and biodiversity of the natural environment by making our schools more sustainable.

(2) recognises our collective responsibility to act sustainably in everything that we do;

(3) creating a carbon-neutral future for schools by actively promoting sustainable practices through education and behavioural change.

(iv) Social equity and economic issues, costs and opportunities in achieving this target;

The ACT Council of Parents & Citizens Association urges, that in the interests of equity, additional funding must be made available to assist disadvantaged schools in achieving sustainability. Also any energy savings achieved through the implementation of sustainability measures must be reinvested within the school to encourage a sense of community ownership and to fund further sustainable initiatives.

(v) the relationship between the ACT's legislated target and policy and measures agreed to and implemented at a national level;

The ACT Government has the opportunity to be a leader, and by its actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions could encourage the rest of Australia to act, for the benefit of current and future generations.

***(vi) the acceptability of local and offshore offsets;
and***

***(vii) the need to ensure that the ACT does not transfer its greenhouse emissions
to other jurisdictions;***

Developed countries, including Australia, have contributed the majority of greenhouse gas emissions, historically. Australia is currently the fifteenth highest emitter⁵ – and amongst the highest per capita emitters⁶. Australians, including those in the ACT, have the responsibility and the capacity to act to reduce greenhouse gas emissions for the benefit of all the Earth. Passing the responsibility of the problem to others is not morally acceptable.

***(viii) the adequacy of existing data collection and methodology for the purpose
of establishing a baseline year of 1990 or 2000 and for future monitoring
and reporting purposes; and***

Schools are establishing baseline data from their individual time-energy audits.

To help this data collection process schools should be funded to install electronic metering which gives real-time information about energy usage. The cost of electronic metering is not great and the technology is commercial off the shelf technology and widely available. This metering would then be an educative tool.

An ACT database would record baseline data from audits and school profiles and help schools and students monitor their energy consumption. Additional professional development for school staff would be needed to facilitate this process. The AuSSI and NSSP are already helping this process in some registered schools, but more funds are needed to assist all schools.

⁵ Herzog, T., Baumert, K. and Pershing, J. (2005), *Target Intensity- An analysis of greenhouse gas intensity targets*, World Resource Institute, Washington DC. Quoted in CANA *ibid*.

⁶ CSIRO (2005), *New hope for reducing greenhouse gas emissions in Australia*, Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation, Canberra, <http://www.csiro.au/news/ps02.html>.

ACT Council of P&C Associations Policy

A3. SUSTAINABILITY IN SCHOOLS

Premise

Sustainability is the process of meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This definition is derived from the World Commission on Environment and Development, also known as the Brundtland Commission, in its report *Our Common Future* (United Nations 1987).

Sustainable development is a way of thinking about how we organise our lives and work so that we do not destroy our most precious resource, planet Earth. Sustainability must therefore be a central part of our education system. It must encompass the entire school community and the school itself.

A healthy environment, consisting of a diverse ecosystem (living beings and their interactions with each other and with their environments), is essential for the well-being of the entire school community. This is a small subsection of the entire human community; the human community being just one small interconnected part of the broader biosphere. P&C Council is committed to pursuing respect for the biosphere.

Schools are ideal places to practise and teach environmental awareness and demonstrate sustainable principles. Schools can be models and leaders within their community to show how society can have a more sustainable future.

Council is committed to pursuing strategies that minimise the impact of human activities on Earth. We are committed to increasing the level of sustainability and environmental awareness in schools through education and implementing ecologically sustainable practices in schools and in all P&C Council activities.

Policy

P&C Council encourages the consideration of alternative, more sustainable strategies and solutions in addressing issues associated with the physical infrastructure of schools and their surroundings, school activities, management and curriculum. The same approach should also be applied to the activities of Council. In moving towards sustainability, Council is attempting to reduce its own ecological footprint and that of ACT schools individually and collectively.

In the interests of equity, additional funding must be made available to assist disadvantaged schools in achieving sustainability.

Action

In seeking to play its part in the wider shared task of achieving human survival, P&C Council:

- a) commits to maintaining and enhancing the integrity and biodiversity of the natural environment;
- b) recognises our collective responsibility to act sustainably in everything that we do;

- c) aims to create a carbon-neutral future for schools and for P&C Council by actively promoting sustainable practices through education and behavioural change;
- d) aims to encourage schools and Council to reduce, reuse, repair and recycle resources to reduce consumption;
- e) urges schools and Council to buy locally produced or 'green' products with reduced packaging and transport , where possible;
- f) will encourage all ACT schools to improve their curriculum ,management and physical infrastructure in the areas of energy use, waste, water, biodiversity and landscape design.;
- g) supports environmental education for sustainability as a central and consistent theme in schools;
- h) will promote the development of suitable, sustainable curriculum at the college level, incorporating local resources as has been done in the junior curriculum—this curriculum should be across many subject areas and not just Science;
- i) will lobby government to provide funding for vocational and emerging 'green industry' courses in addition to curriculum choices already offered to senior students;
- j) will press the ACT Education Department to keep all ACT schools informed of government initiatives regarding sustainability (a current example is the Australian Sustainable Schools Initiative, AuSSI);
- k) will press the ACT Department of Education to actively and creatively encourage the participation of all schools in such initiatives;
- l) will seek specific funding for professional development for teachers in the area of environmental sustainability;
- m) will seek specific funding for a dedicated position in the ACT Department of Education and Training to promote sustainability in schools;
- n) will lobby government to provide sufficient new funds to make the transition to achieve sustainability;
- o) will lobby for any savings brought about through the implementation of sustainability measures to be reinvested within the school to encourage a sense of community ownership and to fund further sustainable initiatives.

(Adopted 2008)