



South East Region Conservation Alliance Inc.

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www.serca.org.au

17 July 2010

Greg Hunt MHR
Parliament House
Canberra, ACT

Dear Greg,

AUSTRALIA'S INTERNATIONAL POLICY ON FORESTS AND CLIMATE

We hope that you as spokesperson for Climate Change, Water and Environment for the Liberal Party will speak out over decisions that benefit our natural environment and move Australia to a climate policy that embraces practical initiatives to retain and restore our native forests.

Currently Australia does not account for its logging emissions under the Kyoto Protocol, such accounting being voluntary and not selected by this country. Mandatory accounting does apply to tree planting however and it is commonly accepted that there is a bias in current provisions that skews the accounting by emphasising sequestration of carbon whilst substantially ignoring emissive activities.

International climate negotiations are discussing increasing the comprehensiveness of accounting in Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF), including by making it mandatory to account for forest management (logging). Australia is standing in the way of agreement to this change.

Further, proposals for accounting forest management in the second commitment period currently being negotiated are flawed because they would allow a large loophole for logging emissions. In Australia's case it has been estimated that such a logging loophole would hide around 50 mega tonnes a year of emissions, and for all Annex 1 countries the loophole would equate to 400 mega tonnes each year.

Such proposals undermine the intention behind moving to mandatory accounting. A climate agreement should fundamentally be aimed at reducing emissions below business-as-usual, but proposals that have

been put forward allow for business-as-usual emissions plus an allowance for increased logging emissions as a baseline against which to then measure and account for any difference. This approach is being taken by Australia.

Coinciding with these international policy issues there is a unique opportunity arising here in Australia to put the divisive forestry debate behind us and save forests as part of a practical climate solution. Informal discussions between industry and the conservation movement are likely to be formalised, and a move away from industrial logging of native forests is on the table. Australia's vast plantation estate can now provide the necessary wood supply for industry.

Australia's international policy settings on Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) should be adjusted to take advantage of this opportunity, and to do the right thing on climate change. Currently they are constructed to enable industrial logging of our forests to evade accountability for emissions. We would not therefore benefit under the Kyoto Protocol from the reduction in emissions that a substantial move away from logging native forests would actually deliver.

In the coming LULUCF talks in August please demand that Australia changes it's policy to:

- end opposition to mandatory accounting of forest management (logging)
- support transparent accounting for emissions from forest management, and
- adopt a goal to reduce emissions and increase carbon stores in LULUCF.

Tony Abbott's Direct Action plans and emphasis on "green carbon" make this an ideal policy for the Liberal Party

Yours sincerely

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