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Submission to the Senate Select Committee Inquiry on Climate policy.

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Dear Senators

35% of atmospheric carbon caused by humans is from the clearing and degradation of forests and other natural vegetation.

For example, we have cleared 50% of the world's forests including those of Australia. This is putting at risk the evolutionary potential of natural forests including their ability to adapt to a changing climate. By failing to account for the uptake of carbon by natural systems we put life on Earth at risk.

No amount of reduction or replacement of fossil use will be enough to save planet Earth from global heating. We must stop the loss of 'green' carbon from deforestation and degradation and enable the huge potential to draw down atmospheric carbon, at the same time as fossil carbon reduction and replacement.

Separate targets for the two sectors – bio-carbon and fossil carbon - must be established thus enabling humans to target these different sectors and reach recommended reductions of green house gases, faster and without unintended consequences, such as clearing rainforests for transport fuels.

Protecting a 'green', i.e., bio-carbon stores, such as the natural, native forests and woodlands of the South East of Australia, would sequester 24% of Australia's emissions for 100 years and on. These figures from ANU, scientists are backed up by similar research on forests in US and Europe.

Forests are best for carbon. Plantations are best for industry.

Forests are self-regenerating natural eco-systems through their diversity of plants, fungi and animals; they continue to store carbon, create rain and of course, store essential water. We cannot 'plant' a forest, as they are complex, beyond replication having evolved over billions of years.

Current Forestry practises in South East Australia have changed wet forests to dry forests, making them more vulnerable to fire.

Plantations are short lived and require maintenance; they produce excellent and efficient products such as high-grade paper. They are inefficient and poor stores of carbon. They die. They are prone to pests and disease.

Natural, native forests are made more vulnerable by the opt-in provision of plantations in the CPRS.

The proposed CPRS using the same UNFCCC regulations, as Europe's ETSs will produce more destruction and more green carbon loses from our unique yet vulnerable forests and animals. This has proved the case in developing countries, such as Indonesia where schemes such as REDD are now needed to protect forests.

The proposed inclusion of plantations and so called 'carbon forests' for carbon credits will encourage low value native forest logging such as woodchipping not just for paper but for bio-energy and fuels, whilst making it more profitable to leave plantations in the ground (encourage plantations over food production.) These carbon credits will chase the cheapest plantations in developing countries where laws and supervision are slack.

Native forests are not renewable under any reasonable time frame, as Treasury points out. Timber is currently treated as a free resource with no externalities counted unlike say, oil. Current pricing as low as \$2.50 per tonne by Forestry Victoria is madness; NSW and Victoria have been propping up SEFE chip mill profits for years, in the name of jobs and despite labour shortages in the plantation sector. The Eden SEFE chip mill's requirements produce around 2% of Australia's GHG annually and has driven Forestry practices towards mono species favoured for woodchips via continual rotations of less than 20 years.

Surely the economic value of native forests for carbon, water and adaptation through resilient bio-diverse ecologies is far more important than the historic and outdated native forest logging industry, which currently dominates the other values of forests? Subsidised plantation timber is available now for virtually all our needs and can replace all native forest timber in the future.

Exclude all bio-carbon sources in the CPRS. If a cap and trade scheme is accepted (and its outcomes are debatable) a separate bio-carbon tax with absolute protection for native forests, both private and State, will be the best, quickest and cheapest way for Australia to meet and beat long term, essential carbon pollution reduction targets. Agricultural products such as plantations and recognition of soil carbon are best included under a carbon tax.

Other Recommendations

- Count all emissions and uptakes from all sources
- Research the full values of natural native forests. CSIRO currently only researches plantations. Funding is urgently required.
- Bio-carbon tax credit scheme for carbon sequestration with separate targets to the fossil carbon reduction targets.
- Change government policies to protect natural, native forests for carbon, water and adaptation through bio-diversity and provide a permanent income stream.
- Move Forestry to plantations; thanks to billions of taxpayer subsidies we have a glut. Encourage appearance grade timber plantations and the use of reconstituted, recycled and plantation only products.
- International definitions of forests are unrepresentative; the whole of Australia would be considered a forest under the current UNFCCC definition.

I wish the Senate well in their critical deliberations and encourage Senators to inform themselves of the potential of natural systems to return the atmosphere of the Earth to a healthy balance.

Yours sincerely

Prue Acton

