

Subject: re: Say Yes to climate action
Date: Wed, 1 Jun 2011 14:52:27 +1000
From: John Faulkner To: Lois Katz

Dear Lois

Thank you for your email about the need for Government action on climate change. Reports from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and those of our own scientists at the CSIRO and the Bureau of Meteorology clearly show the climate is warming; and, it will continue to do so, as a result of greenhouse gas emissions from human activity.

The IPCC's Fourth Assessment Report finds that "warming of the climate system is unequivocal". The IPCC reports that emissions of greenhouse gases due to human activities have grown by 70 per cent between 1970 and 2004 and states that most of the "observed increases in global temperatures since the mid 20th century are very likely to be as a result of human activities". The CSIRO and the Bureau of Meteorology have presented the most recent picture of Australia's climate. Both these organisations have decades of experience observing and reporting on Australia's weather and conducting atmospheric and marine research.

On temperature rises, the CSIRO and Bureau of Meteorology have observed that since 1960 the average temperature in Australia has increased by about 0.7 degrees. Whilst temperatures have varied in different locations; the overall long term trend is clear and there can be no denying Australia has experienced warming over the past 50 years.

The number of days with record hot temperatures has increased each decade over the past half century. 2000 to 2009 was Australia's warmest decade on record. According to the World Meteorological Organisation, last year 2010, along with 2005 and 1998 were the warmest years on record globally.

The CSIRO and Bureau of Meteorology have also reported that the rate of sea level rise increased during the 20th century. From 1870 to 2007, the global average sea level rose by close to 200mm. Over the period of 1993 to 2009 sea level rises have ranged between 1.5 to 3mm per year in the south and east and 7 to 10mm per year in the north and west of Australia. These agencies have also reported that over the period of the last 50 years, the surface temperatures of the oceans around Australia have increased by about 0.4°C. As for the future, the CSIRO and Bureau of Meteorology have projected that Australian average temperatures are going to rise by 0.6 to 1.5 °C by as soon as 2030; and they have also said "if global greenhouse gas emissions continue to grow at rates consistent with past trends, warming is projected to be in the range of 2.2 to 5.0 °C by the year 2070".

Climate Change is not Australia's problem alone. In my long held view – since as Minister for Environment, Sport and Territories, in the Keating Government, I suggested the adoption of a low level carbon levy - it is essential for Australia, as a responsible member of the international community to play its part in reducing global emissions. All around the world, governments are taking action to reduce carbon emissions. In fact, 30 European countries have had a price on carbon the past 6 years. I believe the Australian economy will be hurt and Australian jobs lost if we fail to put a price on carbon in the near future.

The Government's two-stage plan for a carbon price mechanism will start with a fixed price period for three to five years before transitioning to an emissions trading scheme. A carbon price will mean that businesses with the highest levels of pollution will have a very strong incentive to reduce their pollution. The best way to stop businesses polluting and get them to invest in clean energy is to charge them when they pollute. The plan will enable the Government to assist families with household bills and help businesses make the transition to a clean energy future as we tackle climate change.

The Multi-Party Climate Change Committee is continuing discussions about other important elements of the carbon price proposal including the starting level of the fixed price, any phasing in of sectors of the economy, and assistance for both households and industry. I have certainly noted your views about the need for action on this important issue and appreciate you letting me know of them.

Yours sincerely JOHN FAULKNER JUNE 2011