

AEU CLIMATE CHANGE POLICY

Resolution passed by the
AEU Victorian Branch Conference
on August 1, 2009

AEU Victorian Branch

Policy document

August 2009





This is the text of a resolution on climate change passed by the AEU Victorian Branch Conference on August 1, 2009.

That the AEU notes the efforts of the Rudd Labor Government to tackle climate change by:

- Signing the Kyoto Protocol immediately after they were elected,
- Proposing the introduction of an emissions trading scheme, and
- Taking a leadership position in relation to the next round of UN climate negotiations by proposing a 25% reduction in carbon emissions by 2050.

Successfully combating climate change is central to the sustainable economic and social development of Australian society.

The scientific evidence presents an overwhelming picture of the ways in which human activity is causing a significant and severe rise in global temperatures. The burning of fossil fuels, agriculture and transport have caused emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases to reach levels that will negatively affect climate for decades to come.

Australia's ecosystems, agricultural land, water resources, public health, settlements and infrastructure, and weather will suffer increasingly severe consequences as temperatures rise.

The AEU believes that decisive action must be taken to reduce carbon emissions. The available evidence indicates that the costs of climate change could be profound, including losses of biodiversity, increases in mortality and morbidity, destruction of cultures, displacement of people in vulnerable areas, increases in extreme weather events, and global and regional losses in economic output. There is already evidence to suggest that considerable damage has been done and will continue to worsen in the decades to come, however much can be achieved to negate these impacts and ensure the planet we leave to future generations will not be in a worse condition than we inherited.

The AEU rejects the notion that developing nuclear power in Australia is a viable way to mitigate climate change. Apart from the unsolved issue of waste and the consequent legacy of risk for future generations, nuclear energy only becomes economically viable with large increases in the price of energy. Australia is best served by developing a range of initiatives designed to reduce carbon emissions, rather than replacing our current reliance on fossil fuels with another form of polluting energy production.

The AEU supports the introduction of a Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS) as one strategy that has the potential to provide an equitable and cost-effective response to climate change and believes that such a scheme should be introduced in 2011. In addition, there should be a range of additional measures undertaken to mitigate the impact of climate change such as development of renewable energy alternatives, including the setting of a renewable energy target by 2020, development of carbon, capture and storage (CCS) technology and action on energy efficiency measures.

The AEU calls on the Federal Government to:

- Actively lobby governments internationally, leading up to the next round of UN climate change talks in Copenhagen in December 2009, to adopt a minimum target of reducing emissions by 25% by 2020

- Support mechanisms which identify the accountability for carbon emissions at the point of emission creation
- Establish clear targets for industry and consumers to achieve a 60% reduction in Australia's carbon emissions below the year 2000 level by the year 2050
- Set a Mandatory Renewable Energy Target (MRET) for power generation of 25% by 2020
- Establish a national emissions trading scheme to provide the starting point for setting a price on carbon emissions
- Contribute significant resources to the research and development of renewable energy technology
- Invest in energy efficiency programs, particularly in the residential and building sectors, including support for retrofitting buildings
- Encourage investment into renewable energy sources and infrastructure, particularly by those industries that contribute significantly to carbon emissions; and
- Reject any plan to introduce nuclear power into Australia as a "green" alternative to burning fossil fuels.

Further that the Victorian Branch of the AEU also commits to tackling climate change by:

- Developing an action plan to reduce carbon emissions by implementing strategies identified in the environmental audit of the AEU building and its practices
- Continuing to lobby the Victorian Government and Department of Education and Early Childhood development to ensure new or upgraded educational facilities are built according to acceptable Environmentally Sustainable Design
- standards. These standards should be included as part of the DEECD facilities schedule and should include provision for the installation of renewable energy measures such as photovoltaic cells and wind turbines, and landscaping as part of the overall design and cost
- Developing links with environmental organisations to promote the need for education and action in relation to climate change and emission reductions
- Encouraging AEU sub-branches to elect an environment representative or team to develop solutions to environmental issues at the local level and to share solutions through AEU publications
- Lobbying government at all levels and the Education Department to adequately resource education programs/curriculum about the challenges of climate change in Early Childhood, Schools and TAFE and Adult Provision sectors
- Raising environmental issues with AEU members through its publications and forums to promote awareness, debate and action
- Working with the AEU Federal Office and other unions, through the ACTU, to foster social partnerships with community groups, business and the research community to advance initiatives to tackle global warming.

— Branch Council



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