

PRESENTATION FROM THE LATROBE VALLEY SUSTAINABILITY GROUP TO DARREN CHESTER

This is a summary of what we hoped to present at our meeting with you on Wednesday 22/7/09. We covered a number of the issues but not all.

1. **NATs are failing rural people with attitude to climate change.**
 - a. Australia's farmers are some of the most impacted people in the world when it comes to climate change, yet senior NAT's like Barnaby Joyce and Ron Boswell are openly denying that global warming is caused by Green House Gas emissions.
 - b. Do Barnaby, Ron and Warren know something that the US President Barak Obama doesn't. When seen in context, it is a joke to think that a small group of Australian politicians are better informed about global warming than the US President and the United Nations and most world leaders. If they have any evidence that global warming is not caused by human activity, then let them present it to the public.
 - c. To educated voters, this attitude simply reeks of laziness and recklessness by these politicians who think they can round up a few votes by slagging off about greenies. This just demonstrates a lack of discernment of their electorates.
 - d. As much as some voters like what the Nats stand for on many issues, a failure to engage in proper and informed debate about global warming is just going to drive voters with environmental sensitivities to other parties.
 - e. Barnaby's attitude is just more evidence of the power of the coal industry in lobbying senior politicians. Look at the public utterances of not only Barnaby and Boswell, but also of Senator Fielding. It is so obvious that they have been targeted by the coal interests, because they hold the balance of power with passing of the CPRS.
 - f. The Nationals have to engage in the debate to look after the interests of rural Australians. At the moment, whether they are doing it consciously because of financial support or because they have been conned, they are looking after the coal industry and condemning the farming community to an agonising and slow death. Climate change has driven scores of dairy farmers and orchardists out of business in northern Victoria and elsewhere and is reducing the Murray-Darling basin to a fraction of its productive capacity.
 - g. The Nationals should be in there asking for biochar production and arguing that farmers should be paid for sequestering carbon in plantations, encouraging tax breaks for sustainable farming practices as well as promoting biofuels.
 - h. One would think that the Coalition would be unelectable with their present attitudes to climate change.

2. **The Simple but Obvious Reason for a Drying Climate** – alluded to on a “Catalyst” episode on Indian Ocean Dipole Effect, but so obvious that it was not explained fully on that program.
 - a. Laws of Thermodynamics – For any given absolute humidity, there is a temperature at which the water vapour will condense to form liquid – to rain. This is called the Dew Point. With more CO₂ in the atmosphere, more heat is trapped and so the temperature does not cool down to the dew point as often any more.
 - b. This results in less rain in southern Australia. Rainfall increases in the tropics in the wet season because it is nearly 100% relative humidity most of the time and the extra heat over the sea causes more evaporation to tip it over the edge.
 - c. Could look at rainfall data for Sale. Matches predictions made by Dr Greame Pearman of the Atmospheric Physics Division of CSIRO in 1989. Rainfall for Sale so far this decade is 20 % lower than the average for all years recorded before the year 2000.

3. Review of Our reasons for thinking that Climate Change is Man-made

- a. There is too much evidence for the proposition of human induced climate change to ignore. Thoroughly reviewed and checked by the IPCC.
- b. This has been well known for a long time. (NEW SCIENTIST article from 1989)
- c. Dr Greame Pearman's work at CSIRO's Dept of Atmospheric Physics in the late 80's and early 90's.

4. Why has the evidence not been acted upon sooner

- a. There has been a concerted effort by fossil fuel industry bodies to cloud the issue to delay action. Exxon Mobil setting up the International Policy Network with links to Australia's Institute of Public Affairs. Arguing against the proposition of man-made climate change seems to be a priority for right wing lobby groups
 - a. League of Rights members have been active in responding with false information to my Letters to the Editor. Denying Man-made global warming is a high importance agenda for the extreme right wing.
 - b. The opposition to tackling climate change is well organised. E.g. response to the CPRS in the Latrobe Valley. Within a week earlier this year, there were local newspaper interviews with the Power station CEO's, radio interviews with the Mayor, Lisa Price, the General Secretary of the C.F.M.E.U. yourself Darren and finally Malcolm Turnbull all saying that the CPRS would cost jobs in the Valley. An organised scare campaign. To us, this is evidence of someone snapping their fingers in Canberra or the Coal Institute or possibly the Minerals Council and everyone jumps.
 - c. The fossil fuel industries have "targeted" Steve Fielding and probably the Nat senators like Boswell and Joyce, because they hold the key to the CPRS legislation getting through.
 - d. **The campaign of misinformation is redolent of the campaign to deny the link between smoking and cancer.**

5. Corruption of Bureaucratic Process in Canberra.

We are very concerned about the infiltration or stacking of ex Coal industry and Minerals Council people in the Dept. of Energy and other key arms of Government, like ABARE –For \$50,000, one can buy influence, because there is a requirement that some of the cost of the bureau must be recouped from non-government money. Similar story with the CSIRO. See Quarry Vision Quarterly Essay by Guy Pearse. Issue 33 2009.

We have lost confidence in these bodies to provide good independent analyses of Energy issues – particularly the evaluation of the place of renewable energy technologies in Australia.

6. Local Issues

- a. We cannot support any coal field development that will result in an increased amount of CO₂ going into the atmosphere
- b. Exergen and Coldry proposals where dried coal is to be exported to India and China respectively, cannot be supported.
- c. Exergen is also proposing to liquefy coal to make oil. Again, this will result in extra CO₂ emissions. However, if this displaces petroleum use, then it may be seen as an off-set.
- d. We are vehemently opposed to any more coal fired power stations in the Valley.
- e. We also oppose new coal fields on the grounds of the loss of good farming land in a relatively reliable rainfall area.
- f. Realistically, if they were to use all the coal that was available in East Gippsland, then an area beyond Maffra would be need to be dug up.

- g. The government should look at grants for the installation of solar heating on all indoor swimming pools. In Traralgon, the indoor pool is still heated by electricity and has no thermal blanket.
- h. Better public transport to cater for the increasing population. Eventually, there will be a need for a double track railway to Sale and possibly Bairnsdale. Any underpasses should cater for a double track to save money later on.
- i. Passenger services need to start earlier from Melbourne to arrive at Sale before 9 am. Many people now live in Warragul or nearer Melbourne and work in Traralgon or Sale, but have to drive at present, because the first train does not arrive at Traralgon till after 9:00 am.
- j. Eventually we need a station at Latrobe Regional Hospital. This would help with the recruitment of staff, who could still live in Melbourne, but could now comfortably commute to Latrobe Regional Hospital. This would also be convenient for many patients.
- k. Similar story for academics working at Monash Churchill.
- l. More encouragement of local sustainability measures. E.g. Neville Smith timber mill at Heyfield were investigating the installation of their own electricity generator that would be fired from the saw-dust. They could have done it for 20 c per kWh, and they were being charged 16 c per kWh at the time. However, a local electricity provider, worried about the loss of sales offered electricity at 12 c /kWh and the dalliance with the idea was killed off. Need government intervention to make good ideas work.
- m. Could consider a premium for ecological wood – wood produced by the above environmentally sound method or a penalty for wood produced with a high carbon foot-print.
- n. If geo-sequestration comes in, then the price of electricity needs to rise to reflect the cost of the carbon capture and geo-sequestration. This would also make renewables more attractive.

7. The Future for the Valley

The LVSG has prepared a document for looking at the future of the Latrobe Valley with a reduced reliance on coal. It is called the “Vision for the Valley” Document.

8. Alternative Job Prospects for the Valley

9. BIOCHAR plant to be attached to the Gippsland Water Factory

- a. Need a feasibility Study. The solid waste from the Water factory will be disposed of by semi-trailer haulage to Dutson Downs. Not a very sustainable practice in itself because of the fossil fuel usage by the trucks. Why not use this carbon rich waste to produce Biochar, which is a rich fertiliser for agriculture and a source of a biofuel called Syngas.