

A Fair Society

Environment and Climate Change Policy

1. Global warming is the policy challenge of our time. The scientific evidence is overwhelming:
 - Human economic activity is causing global warming.
 - The present and future rise in global temperature is significant and severe.
 - Today's emissions will affect climate for decades to come.
2. Eleven of the last twelve years rank among the twelve warmest years on record since 1850. Continued greenhouse gas emissions at or above the current rates will cause further warming. Australia's ecosystems; cropping, forestry and livestock; water resources; public health; settlements; infrastructure; tourism industry and weather will suffer consequences, increasing in severity, as the temperatures rise.
3. With prolonged droughts and the severity of the bushfires and the floods of 2009, it is increasingly evident for Australians that global warming has profound economic and social consequences.
4. Unless decisive action is taken now to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, the planet we bequeath to future generations will be harsher and more hostile to the human condition than that which we have inherited.
5. Environment, economy and society are the three faces of policy - all integrated and inseparable - in any program of sustainable global development.
6. To reduce poverty, raise living standards, protect and create decent jobs, and provide opportunity for all, the environmental consequences of our energy use, production and consumption must be modified.
7. The ACTU accepts that the costs of not reducing emissions is far higher than that of taking action. Decisive action to reduce global emissions is necessary for continuing sustained economic growth.
8. The ACTU calls for effective action on climate change which requires urgent and decisive action to transition Australia to a low carbon

economy. The ACTU rejects the assessment that the necessary actions to effect this transition will damage the economy. Rather, we accept that as the global economy switches to a low carbon future, the result will create multi-trillion dollar markets for low carbon and clean energy technologies, infrastructure and consequently production processes. Australia needs to ensure that its current and future industries are competitive in this global low carbon economy.

9. The ACTU commits to:
 - a) ensuring that the transition process protects jobs in carbon intensive industries;
 - b) support those industries to achieve best of sector standards to remain competitive; and
 - c) promote growth in green jobs in associated/new industries and services.
10. Action on energy efficiency measures, the expansion of renewable energy capacity and an emissions trading scheme, along with rapid development of clean technologies are essential to success for the Australian economy.
11. These ambitions for economic development and decent work require associated workforce development, skills and training, including measures to assist transition of people and skills between sectors.
12. The ACTU calls for concerted national and international agreement and investment to reduce emissions to 450 parts per million (ppm) or better, in line with the recommendations of the UN International Panel on Climate Change.
13. The ACTU congratulates the Rudd government for signing the Kyoto Protocol and for their recent commitment to lift their commitment to set a target of a 25 per cent reduction in carbon emissions by 2020 in the event of a comprehensive global agreement. The ACTU urges the government to heed the continuing advance in the scientific knowledge and understanding in regard to global warming and to keep their commitment to 60 per cent reduction in carbon emissions by 2050 under review.
14. Congress further calls on world leaders to ensure financing for a just transition that genuinely deals with issues for social justice for the world's poorest and most vulnerable nations.
15. Congress supports the ITUC's call for a just transition that ensures:
 - a) equitable sharing of responsibilities and fair distribution of the costs: those who have contributed less to the problem should not bear the burden of the transition costs

- b) institutionalised formal consultations with relevant stakeholders including trade unions, employers and communities, at national, regional, and when appropriate, sectoral levels;
 - c) the promotion of green job opportunities and investment in low carbon development strategies and technologies in all nations and the appropriate educational qualifications that enhance workers capacity;
 - d) formal education, training, retraining, and life-long learning for workers, their families, and the communities that depend upon them;
 - e) organised economic and employment diversification policies within sectors and communities at risk;
 - f) social protection measures (active labour market policies, access to health services, social insurances, among others); and
 - g) respect for and protection of human and labour rights.
16. Investment in climate change solutions will involve massive sums and should be benchmarked against ethical investment principles such as those promoted by the United Nations. Industry superannuation funds should be encouraged to invest in these areas.
17. The ACTU supports a broadly based Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS), including transport and forestry, with a strong emissions reduction cap as one of the essential tools to drive long-term structural changes in the Australian economy.
18. The ETS with consequent auctioning of permits, must be just, support vulnerable Emissions-Intensive Trade-Exposed (EITE) industries during transition but be designed to ensure all industries are required to make the changes necessary to get to best practice standards to ensure global competitiveness and survival of Australia's traditional industries. Within this framework, trade exposed industries should draw a fair and transparent discount and/or subsidy against the full carbon price with a process of regular review. Support from industry policy or infrastructure investment may also be necessary to ensure technological development and workplace change that both prevents carbon and jobs leakage in the short term, and ensures sustainability for all these industries in a low carbon future. In return for necessary support these industries should be required to meet transparent benchmarks to lift them to best practice.
19. The ACTU supports the government's announced amendments to the proposed Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS) including:
- a) a carbon emissions reduction target of 25 per cent by 2020 in the event of a comprehensive global agreement to stabilise emissions at 450 ppm or better;

- b) a 2011 start date and a one year fixed price;
 - c) a recession buffer of additional support for vulnerable industries;
 - d) funding for demonstration projects for energy efficiency measures in the built sector; and
 - e) recognition of voluntary effort with the purchase of 'green power' to influence the price cap and an 'Australian Carbon Trust'.
20. Monies raised from the auctioning of permits must be used to support low income households, trade exposed industries - including employment in those industries - and rapid development of green technologies. Wherever possible, compensation for the low paid should be directed at increasing their capacity to enjoy the benefits of a low carbon future through insulated homes, use of locally produced solar hot water, and more efficient transport options.
 21. Congress also supports the negotiation of sectoral agreements to ensure a level playing field for trade exposed industries and calls for an urgent process of measurement and the necessary resources to determine sectoral emissions and subsequent offsets for the inclusion of forestry and horticulture.
 22. The introduction of an ETS presents a significant opportunity to provide a proper and secure economic base for those of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities who have title over, in many cases, large tracts of land. Australia must ensure that this process does not repeat historical processes which have economically excluded Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It is imperative that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are engaged from the beginning and throughout these processes.
 23. Further, governments must ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights, including economic, Native Title and cultural rights, are not impinged upon.
 24. Equally, Congress welcomes the endorsement by COAG of the renewable energy target of 20% by 2020 (MRET) and call for the necessary investment in renewable energy to drive new technologies and therefore new industries and jobs.
 25. The ACTU, with the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF), has endorsed analysis that says Australia could have at least a quarter of a trillion dollar share of a three trillion dollar or more global green products industry with more than 800,000 new green jobs within 20 years. This requires industry policy, research and development, regulatory settings and investment including in:

- a) construction and related services in green buildings, retrofitting in residential and commercial buildings, and building waste and recycling;
 - b) renewable energy technologies with support for new industries in solar thermal, geothermal and wave and tidal technologies;
 - c) new manufacturing in biomaterials and other developing technologies;
 - d) waste and recycling;
 - e) agriculture including bio-sequestration;
 - f) forestry, carbon sinks and sequestration opportunities;
 - g) automotive and rail, road and shipping transport - any transport plan must encompass increased and more energy efficient public transport infrastructure;
 - h) carbon capture and storage, combined cycle, and other emerging clean technology development;
 - i) an integrated approach to broadband, a smart grid, smart metering and distributional energy design supported by a feed-in tariff; and
 - j) water technologies and management.
26. Market measures alone are not likely to be sufficient to achieve the necessary environmental, social, and economic changes required. Consequently, support for research and development and industry policy must be significant and complemented by regulation where necessary.
27. Congress calls on all governments to adopt procurement policies that promote local production of goods and services, especially those which are more sustainable and impose competitive tendering which takes account of transport costs and energy inputs in imported products. Further, we support consideration of broader adjustment measures where trading partners do not meet agreed industry standards.
28. The elimination of inefficient light globes should be complete in Australia by 2012 and replaced with safe lighting that does not damage the health of workers in the manufacturing process through, for example, the handling of mercury. All residential buildings should be insulated by 2012 and government buildings and public service facilities including schools and hospitals should be retrofitted by 2015.
29. Incentives for investment in new green jobs and training programmes should include targeting areas from which carbon intensive jobs are at risk.

30. Achieving the transition to a low carbon, sustainable economy will require a massive mobilisation of skills and training - both to equip new workers and to enable appropriate changes in practices by the three million workers already employed in key sectors influencing our environmental footprint. The ACTU will support training to make existing and new jobs environmentally sustainable.
31. The ACTU calls for an immediate 40,000 Productivity Places to be allocated to up-skill existing workers and a comprehensive 'workforce development plan' to be compiled by Skills Australia.
32. The ACTU notes that global warming will have implications for public health. Increases in temperature will see a rise in heat-related illness and death, with the elderly and poor most at risk. The predicted increase in extreme weather events will also impact hardest on the most vulnerable in our society. The spread of vector borne diseases and the wider transmission and reintroduction into Australia of diseases such as Dengue fever and Ross River virus is predicted as the climate warms.
33. Climate change and global warming will result in placing an ever-increasing demand on fire and other emergency services. To address this increased threat, the current risk management process of fire and other services should be benchmarked and reviewed by way of national audit. Such audit will determine if there are adequate resources, staffing levels, procedures and equipment to provide an effective response to this increasing threat. In particular, there should be a Federal Government body established to audit and monitor the on-going capacity of fire services based on global expectations and projections of threats to industry and community.
34. The ACTU also recognises that the work of those employed in public institutions such as the CSIRO, the Bureau of Meteorology, Geoscience Australia, the Australian Institute of Marine Science, the Antarctic Division, and the universities and TAFE colleges will be critical.
35. The ACTU endorses support for workers' engagement and action on global warming including the:
 - a) right to participate in decision making related to environmental concerns in their workplace, exercised through the joint health and safety committee or workplace safety and health representatives, or through new environmental committees;
 - b) right-to-know and understand the environmental hazards in the workplace along with workplace emissions, technological choices and plans for energy saving, use and efficiency;
 - c) 'whistleblower' protection so that a worker may not be held liable or be disciplined for reporting workplace practices that are honestly believed to pose an environmental risk;

- d) right to refuse dangerous work such that a worker may not be held liable or be disciplined for refusing to perform work that he/she honestly believes may pose an immediate or serious threat to his/her or other workers' health;
 - e) right to refuse work which harms the environment such that a worker may not be held liable or be disciplined for refusing to do work that he/she honestly believes may pose an immediate or serious threat to the environment.
36. Since workplaces consume vast amounts of energy and other resources and generate wastes, it is crucial that clear workplace targets for energy efficiency and waste minimisation be linked to industry and national carbon and waste reduction strategies. Such targets, and the means of meeting them, can and should be the subject of collective bargaining.
37. The ACTU and affiliates commit to:
- a) co-ordinating workplace campaigns for energy efficiency, including bargaining for change, skills and development of cleaner workplace and waste processes;
 - b) establish workplace environment committees;
 - c) add sustainability to the agenda of branch council/executive meetings and having a Climate Policy;
 - d) co-ordinate industry-wide campaigns for industry policy, investment and/or regulation necessary for making the transition to a low carbon economy;
 - e) identify key issues and areas for research and development and job opportunities;
 - f) provide advice to members wherever appropriate;
 - g) lead by example in reducing the environmental footprint of our workplaces by taking the necessary steps to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions;
 - h) empower workers to participate in local, national and international forums on global warming;
 - i) work with broader civil society to influence government policy where there are common interests and values, including jobs growth, ensuring support for vulnerable Australians and other social justice measures, and collective action where the impact of climate change is endangering communities;
 - j) commit to share relevant collective bargaining agreement clauses.