

Environment And Sustainable Development Policy

ACTU Congress September 1991

1. Introduction

1.1 Congress believes that the long term interests of workers and the community depend upon developing an economy which maximises job creation, job security and improves workers' living standards while at the same time is environmentally sustainable for the future.

Any policy must recognise that the environment and economic development are closely inter-dependent.

1.2 Congress believes that conserving and repairing the environment is an urgent matter that requires immediate attention. The Environment includes all aspects of our surrounding whether affected us as individuals or in social groups. Environment matters and their inter-relationships with employment and the economy are crucial to the interests of workers.

1.3 Congress notes with grave concern that worsening environmental problems like the Greenhouse effect, ozone depletion, oceanic pollution and soil degradation threaten the livelihood and health of workers and their families.

1.4 The number and nature of jobs, the pattern of economic development, the balance of payments, appropriate tax and investment incentives, research and development, education, training and retraining, occupational health and safety and quality of life issues, urban and regional infrastructure are all inextricably connected with the question of environmental management. In particular, Congress believes the union movement must promote job creation, training and retraining for workers in industries changed because of environmental issues.

1.5 Preservation of the environment is not only important to workers' living standards but can be positive for job creation in certain sectors e.g. tourism, public transport and specialist environmentally sound products and services.

2. General Principles

2.1 Congress determines that the general principles set out in this policy provide a framework for the ACTU's position on the environment and ecologically sustainable development (ESD).

2.2 Social Equity

A fundamental cause of environmental abuse is the uneven distribution of wealth and resources. Those who have little wealth also have little choice in their work, consumption and lifestyle. The costs of achieving ecological sustainability must be born equitably and cannot be at the expense of the disadvantaged.

2.3 Equity for Future Generations

The present generation must ensure that the next generation inherits an environment and economy that are more ecologically sustainable, diverse and productive than the one we now have. To the greatest extent practicable our use of natural resources should be limited to a level that is sustainable on a long term basis, both in terms of economic activity and the quality of the resource.

Use of renewable resources should be managed so as to ensure their availability for long term continued use. In the case of non-renewables (such as mineral resources) the wealth generated from a finite resource today should not be squandered but instead provide lasting benefits including the development of the viable and sustainable alternatives that can be enjoyed by future generations. Options to achieve this will need to be explored.

2.4 Cost of Structural Adjustment

A fundamental flaw in the approach of many in the environment debate is that they have no real regard for considerations of social equity as they opt for solutions which have major, adverse, employment ramifications.

If a decision is made that particular processes or certain industries are ecologically unsustainable then the costs of social and economic dislocation must be integrated into the decision making process. The costs to labour, the wider community and the government must be treated as an integral part in achieving ESD not simply as consequential problems to be solved by the market.

In particular, planning in relation employment impacts should be a key feature of any set of ESD principles applying to any industry or sector. The trade union movement must promote job creation, training and retraining for workers in industries changed because of environmental considerations and the costs associated with this restriction should be born by the community and not the individuals affected.

2.5 Best Environmental Practice

Congress is committed to the achievement of further economic growth as a means of achieving full employment, improved living standards, addressing our trade deficit and fulfilling social needs. In order to maintain and improve living standards relative to other developed countries the Australian economy will need products and services to supplement earnings from commodity exports. It should be acknowledge that the ESD process has the potential to provide an added impetus to industry development through growth opportunities in emerging ecologically sustainable industries. This may involve the expansion of domestic and export orientated value added industries and the exportation of new technological developments. The outcome of the process of change must be a more competitive economy for both the export and domestic markets. Approach of the trade union movement to industry development is interventionist in nature. We believe that it is necessary for the Government to intervene in an integrated way to ensure that industry development occurs and that appropriate regulatory and other measures are adopted to achieve sustainable development.

As distinct from a simplistic reliance upon pure market forces trade unions must continue to work to have long term planning objectives established with clear priorities, specific targets and flexible adjustments for change whilst taking market forces into account.

Such adjustment is essential for the future of Australian industry if growth is to be maximised in the

longer term. The necessary adjustments and the attainment of the objective of full employment will be more readily secured if policies facilitating change are integrated with general economic policies via accepted planning mechanisms.

The ESD process requires a shift in emphasis towards best environmental practice, eg promoting the most fuel efficient and environmentally sustainable production methods. Congress recognises that ecologically sustainable production techniques and work practices are central to the long term viability of Australian industries. We need to encourage Australian companies to adopt Best Practice Environmental Management. This involves the introduction of innovative processes, new technology and production techniques to minimise the impact on the environment as well as making environmental decisions a more central focus.

Congress expressed concern about the lack of existing initiatives to promote environmental consciousness and develop sound environmental standards and practices across all sectors of industry.

If Australian industries are to compete successfully in world and domestic markets then they must ensure that their products (and hence the processes devised to produce those products) meet the environmental standards of consumers and their governments. Failure to meet those standards can only result in loss of market share and the eventual loss of Australian jobs. This situation applies as much to the agricultural and services sectors as it does to the manufacturing sector of our economy.

Congress supports a positive approach which seeks to identify and eliminate environmental hazards at their source rather than simply focusing on post-pollutant end-of-pipe solutions.

Congress notes that there are substantial benefits to the community through the adoption of best environmental practice. These benefits may include reductions in energy costs, reductions in raw material usage, reductions or elimination of waste products, improvements in the working environment and a general improvement in the quality and public image of an enterprise and its products, which in turn leads to clear marketing advantages and the minimisation of legal claims and fines.

Fundamental, however, to any successful implementation of best environmental practice is the education and involvement of unions and workers at all levels of an enterprise to help identify and quantify the problems and to seek creative solutions to those problems. Those solutions may involve changes to the work organisation and work practices of employees which proceed from a clear understanding of the reasons for change and depend upon the support and co-operation of the workers to implement such changes. Often occupational health and safety problems overlap with environmental concerns and hence demand solutions which involve a broad overview of a firm's operations.

In this context, Congress calls on governments to protect the rights of workers in relation to environmental matters. In particular, governments are urged to protect:

- The right of workers to bring to the attention of fellow workers, employers and the public the dangers of environmentally harmful processes and products without fear of victimisation and;
- The right of workers to participate in the formulation and implementation of action plans to establish clean production techniques and practices in the workplace and the ability to exercise these rights through the provision of adequate environmental education and skills development.

2.6 Conservation of Ecosystems and the Diversity of Species

The principles of risk minimisation and intergenerational equity mean that we must ensure the conservation of ecosystems and that the diversity of species of flora and fauna is maintained.

This means that all human activity should seek to minimise its impacts on the environment. In a number of instances it may be necessary to proscribe industrial activity in areas which are deemed to be of key significance to the maintenance of ecological integrity. This may have both a quantitative and qualitative aspects; certain amounts of areas as well as certain types of areas will need to be set aside to preserve eco-systems and biodiversity.

However, in the context of this approach, innovative options for land use should be explored so that society is not arbitrarily deprived of economic opportunity for insufficient environmental gain.

Congress supports policies, strategies and programs that protect the breadth and diversity of flora and fauna that exist in Australia. This goes beyond the protection of endangered species to measures to assess and maintain the full stock of flora and fauna in such a manner as will enable normal evolutionary processes to continue.

Congress notes that since European settlement the rate of species loss in Australia has been high. This is of particular concern as much of our wildlife is unique. On the 260 mammals originally present in Australia, approximately 188 are unique to Australia, and some 20 have become extinct in the last 200 years.

Our knowledge of what flora and fauna exist in Australia, its distribution and the interaction of individual species with other species and immediate ecosystems is poorly developed. Congress therefore calls for a substantial upgrading of the research effort to documenter natural heritage in this crucial area.

The work of the Environmental Resource Information Network and the National Resource Information Centre, operate by the Federal Government, should be the main avenue for this upgraded effort. Special attention should be directed to ensuring that the rapidly developing databases on this are integrated and centralised where possible. The development of such a data base as one means of enabling better judgements to be made about the impact of development proposals in particular areas.

2.7 Efficiency and resilience

We need to promote greater efficiency and resilience. Efficiency means getting the most benefit out of the resources we use. The benefit is twofold:

- it lessens the demand for natural resources and therefore contributes to sustainability.
- it lessens the costs of production and thereby makes goods and services cheaper and more internationally competitive.

There are three key goals in this regard:

- placing greater emphasis on the efficient use of raw material and energy input into the production process;
- adding greater value to production through improvements in quality and production

technology. In this way more wealth is generated for a given unit of resource;

- moving away from wasteful consumerism and the 'throw away mentality'.

There is substantial room for improvement in almost all aspects of our use of resources but from an ecological viewpoint the need for efficiency is greatest in our use of energy.

Resilience means having an economic structure that can adapt to changing circumstances with a minimum of adverse consequences. The key to resilience is a diversified economic base. Reliance on a small number of industries leaves an economy open to major shocks if those industries are called into question for either economic or environmental reasons. The trade union movement has long argued that Australia needs to broaden its economic base away from a reliance on primary industries, especially in our international trade. A key part of such a strategy is the development of secondary 'downstream' processing in Australia. The development of such industries in Australia can for example reduce energy use in transportation and hence the demand for natural resources.

2.8 Workers Health and Safety

The achievement of a healthy and safe working environment should be an integral part of the ESD process.

3. The ESD Working Group Process

3.1 Congress notes that the ACTU has participated actively in the nine Working Groups on Ecologically Sustainable Development established by the Federal Government in September 1990 and which are due to report in October 1991.

3.2 Congress endorses the Government's initiatives in establishing the process. It has proven to be a major first step in bringing to the negotiating table the major interest groups involved (often in an adversarial context) in environment issues - federal and state governments, peak business organisations, consumer and welfare groups, trade unions and environmental groups.

3.3 The Working Group process has resulted in major progress being made in reaching agreement on many aspects of environmental policy eg: energy efficiency, waste minimisation and recycling. However, significant points of disagreement remain and there will be a requirement for further substantial work by all parties to reach the greatest possible level of agreement and to devise policies to implement the agreed strategies.

3.4 Accordingly Congress:

gives support to the ESD Working Group process recognises that the process is an innovative and participatory strategy for resolving environmental conflict and is a 'world first' for Australia

encourages those unions which are participating in the Working Groups as ACTU representatives to maximise their input so as to ensure that ACTU environment policy is implemented

encourages all affiliates to pay due attention to the outcomes of the Working Groups as they are likely to significantly affect, over time, the working lives of most Australians

calls on the Working Groups to ensure that the interests of working people are integrated into the final policy recommendations. The thematic approach should be that current and future development should be sustainable in its impact on the workforce as well as in its impacts on the environment. Therefore:

- the benefits and costs of achieving ESD should be borne equitably. Workers in particular industries and low income earners should not have to bear a disproportionate share of the costs associated with restructuring particular industries and the wider economy;
- improvements in occupational health and safety should be seen as a measure of sustainability;
- education and training must be seen as a key strategy for enabling all workers to contribute to improved environmental practice; and
- the concept and role of labour market adjustment programs in facilitating industry restructuring and in minimising adverse impacts on workers needs to be further researched and upgraded.

Calls for the development of a series of indicators or criteria that measure Australia's progress in ESD. These criterion should encompass environmental, economic and social values, for example soil degradation, energy efficiency, biodiversity, wealth distribution, literacy rates, life expectancy, public health and occupational health and safety.

Calls on the Environment and Sustainable Development Committee and the ACTU Executive to actively explore options for an ongoing role for trade unions in the achievement of ESD beyond the conclusion of the Working Group process in October 1991.

3.5 Congress believes that the current working group process - due to report in October 1991 -is the mechanism for providing a framework for environmental decision making. such an outcome will provide a greater degree of certainty.

3.6 Congress recognizes that in order to effectively implement ACTU Environment and Sustainable Development Policy it is necessary to provide adequate resources to the Environment and Sustainable Development Subcommittee.

3.7 Congress therefore calls on the Federal Government to urgently provide the resources required to assist the ACTU to develop strategies and initiate action programs in accordance with this policy

4. Rural Land Use and Land Management

4.1 The expansion of agricultural activities, increasing numbers of cattle and sheep and inappropriate land management practices has lead to severe soil degradation and contributed to the Greenhouse effect.

4.2 It is estimated that lost productivity from soil degradation alone costs \$600 million per year. Water intensive irrigation, the over use of fertilisers and the massive clearing of trees only accelerate the process.

4.3 Congress supports the following proposals:

The Federal Government's Land-care Scheme of \$300 million commitment to implement land preservation measures;

The Federal Government's Natural Resources Management Strategy and Re-vegetation Scheme which involves the planting of one billion trees over the next decade;

Establishing links with rural organisations and environmentalists to pursue issues such as a national approach to conservation of farm lands and the development of methods for reducing the Greenhouse effect through proper fertiliser application and livestock management.

4.4 Recognising that the Government's initiative to plant one billion trees is positive but in fact is at best one twelfth of the required replanting identified by the C.S.I.R.O. the ACTU will seek to develop a proposal in conjunction with the C.S.I.R.O. and relevant State Government Departments to enhance the afforestation program.

4.5 Congress is aware that there are many competing demands for land in Australia. Including primary industry activities not only agriculture, forestry and mining, but also manufacturing, tourism and other industry. Further, urban development often competes for land. The need to have regard to aboriginal claims to land and to preserve ecosystems for cultural, aesthetic and survival purposes imposes additional demands on land use and land access in Australia.

4.6 Congress notes that there is no comprehensive policy or set of principles on land use in Australia and no systematic means for evaluation and arbitrating on competing claims.

4.7 Congress proposes that the current confusion over land access issues should be resolved on the following basis:

Nature conservation zones in Australia should be assessed and reclassified according to new national criteria for the preservation of biodiversity and ecological systems. Preferably such criteria should be internationally recognised and therefore the classification adopted by the international Union for the Conservation of Nature may serve as a benchmark.

It should be acknowledged that the current network of reserves in Australia is inadequate and, over time, there should be an increase in the amount of land set aside in Australia exclusively for such purposes. Any additions to the reserve network should first be assessed through the ESD process for their Ecological and Resources value. It is neither possible nor desirable to specify an exact target amount of land.

Recognising that the vast majority of Australia's ecosystems and flora and fauna will continue to exist outside of such reserves their land management strategies should be developed for all land uses in Australia that explicitly recognise that multiple and sequential land use will need to be the normal practice for most land. That is, land use classifications should recognise that, in addition to their primary use (eg: agriculture or urban development) land should also cater to other concurrent uses (eg: as a habitat for particular species) and seek to minimise environmental impacts.

Calls for the development of a mechanism to resolve disputes over competing claims to land or land access. Such a mechanism should involve the bringing together of the major parties with direct interests -government, business, environmental groups, trade unions and aboriginals representatives.

5. Forests

5.1 Congress recognises that the issues of forests, logging and the environment are complex and immediate.

5.2 Congress believes that a balance must be reached between maintaining a modern forest products industry and ensuring the long term ecological sustainability of Australian forests, particularly of native forests.

5.3 Where ecological sustainability cannot be ensured logging in native forests should be banned. The issue of logging in native forests will be the subject of further consideration through the ESD process.

5.4 Congress believes that the protection of rainforests is not only important for the environment but important for the heritage of our country now and for future generations. Congress believes that Australian rainforests should be preserved and supports government action to secure this objective.

5.5 The ACTU calls on the Federal Government to promote international agreements that preserve the world's remaining rainforest areas and eliminate the importation of timber from threatened rainforest areas. In this regard resolution 9 of the IFDWW on the destruction of rain forests and the use of tropical timber represents a significant contribution on the debate on this issue.

5.6 In this regard Congress applauds the initiative taken in establishing the Ministerial contact group including ACTU and ACF representation and the consultancy with terms of reference including the making of recommendations on how Australia could adjust its role in the international tropical timber industry after assessing the environmental and social-economic consequences of all possible options which could result in increased tropical forest protection.

5.7 In the context of this review and having regard to resolution 9 of the IFDWW on the destruction of rainforests and the use of tropical timber. Congress determines that relevant unions will meet to consider targeted bans designed to enhance rainforest protection.

5.8 Congress notes that over the past 25 years softwood products make up a significant proportion of forest products consumed by Australians. Congress also notes that the potential for expansion of the timber industry relies heavily upon a significant expansion of softwood plantations in strategic regions.

5.9 Accordingly Congress supports the expansion of softwood and hardwood plantations to meet future demands for forest products.

6. Pulp and Paper

6.1 Congress recognises that pulp and paper mills provide employment, inject capital in the economy and can substantially contribute to Australia's export earnings. Therefore Congress supports the growth of a paper production industry that can be developed in a sustainable manner.

6.2 Congress notes that most pulp mills rely heavily on native forests for feedstock when first established. Congress believes that as soon as practicable, pulp mill feedstock should be produced from plantations and sawlog residues and that native forests be rehabilitated.

6.3 To provide an environmentally sustainable pulp and paper industry Congress believes that:

The union movement should support the development of an economically sustainable pulp industry. The expansion of this industry should be environmentally sustainable. Such expansion would reduce the export of woodchips from Australia and provide added value to the paper industry as a whole including the processing of materials currently burnt as waste. Also increased processing in Australia would reduce processing in other countries where lack of environment controls results in damaging effluent discharge.

Research should be conducted into current and alternate technologies that would eliminate the production of dangerous chemicals.

Governments and the private sector should establish a resource base for future pulp mills by means of plantation and agroforestry.

The use of recycled and unbleached paper products in all Government Departments/Authorities, industry and affiliated unions should be encouraged.

The Government together with industry should introduce a program for recycling paper including funding distribution infrastructure to ensure that the maximum percentage of paper is recycled.

7. Standards for Processing Plants

7.1 Congress notes that investments in major developments to further process many of our natural resources need to be made against a clear set of national environmental standards as in many industries such processing can involve environmentally hazardous and toxic emissions and effluents such as dioxins.

7.2 Such standards should be set at or above the world's best and should be scientifically determined.

7.3 Congress supports the development of best practice environmental standards through an open consultative process. However, the shift to best environmental practice must together with other elements of industry policy, not put Australia at such a competitive cost disadvantage as to preclude development and a lower reliance on imports. Steps must be taken to ensure that such standards are applied in a predictable and consistent way. This involves the development of a rational co-ordinated approvals process for new developments which minimises uncertainty and unnecessary delay.

7.4 The adoption of best environmental practice does not end with the development of standards. On going monitoring and performance assessment also needs to be undertaken.

8. Energy Production, Distribution and Use

8.1 Emissions of carbon dioxide resulting from fossil fuel combustion is one of the major sources of Greenhouse gases. Much of Australia's electricity generation depends on black and brown coal combustion which generates CO₂ emissions. Combined with Australia's use of fossil fuel in transport and industry this produces a high level of per capita CO₂ emission. It is imperative that Australia acts

to reduce its emissions of all greenhouse gases. Strategies to achieve this goal should recognise that:

- per capita CO₂ emission in Australia is one of the highest in the world - there is substantial room for improvement;
- Australia only emits around 1.3% of global anthropogenic carbon dioxide and therefore there are major limits to the impact we can have on global emissions;
- the greenhouse problem requires a global solution therefore multi-lateral rather than unilateral measures are favoured.

8.2 Australia is a highly urbanised society with a high concentration of the population in capital cities. There is also a relatively widespread use of private motor vehicles for transportation which combined with inadequate resourcing of public transport has led to an overall transport system that is inefficient in its energy use. Congress believes that it is critical that public infrastructure capital is available to ensure an efficient modern public transport system.

8.3 Recognising the environmental problems associated with energy production distribution and use Congress:

- Reaffirms the 1981 Congress decisions of the Conservation of Energy Resources and the Environment and Pollution;
- Endorses the adoption by the Federal Government of the target of seeking to stabilise carbon dioxide emissions at 1988 levels by 2000 and reducing them by 20% by 2005, provided that measures which have set adverse economic impacts or adversely affect Australia's trade competitiveness will not be implemented in the absence of similar action by major greenhouse gas producing countries;
- Recognises that there are a range of low cost measures available that will reduce greenhouse emissions and calls for their implementation forthwith;
- Cautions that measures which may have major implications in terms of cost or social dislocation should not be implemented in the absence of international agreement for all countries to act in concert. Should such international agreement be reached there will be a need to develop comprehensive labour market adjustment programs to facilitate the necessary industry restructuring whilst minimising the associated social costs;
- Supports the initiatives of the Federal Government in the international negotiations on a climate change convention;
- Calls on Governments to fund research into energy efficiency and renewable energy technologies.
- Recognises that the reduction of emissions will require a mixture of pricing, taxation and regulatory measures. Price measures alone may have an adverse effect on low income earners and in many cases regulatory and planning measures will be the most efficient and effective means of achieving change;
- Calls on federal and state government to develop a national approach to encourage improved performance in all energy production distribution and use, for example in power stations, vehicles, building, plant and equipment and domestic appliances.

9. Transport

9.1 Congress calls on federal and state governments to establish an urban public transport development strategy for Aust cities aimed at integrating land use planning with public transport expansion, to facilitate significant reductions in gasoline use per capita.

9.2 Congress notes that the relationship between the transport sector and the environment extends beyond concerns about the transport sector's responsibility for fossil fuel emissions and accumulation of greenhouse gases.

9.3 Accordingly, in addition to specific energy conservation strategies aimed at minimising the transport sector's large responsibility for fossil fuel emissions, Congress calls on Federal and State Governments to develop social accounting criteria to fully reflect all environmental benefits and costs associated with decisions about transport infrastructure development, use and pricing.

10. Mining

10.1 The mining industry is both one of Australia's most important industries in terms of exports and one which has significant environmental impacts. Mining contributes over 7% of Australia's GDP whilst directly employing 1.3% of the workforce. It is the major supplier or supporter of infrastructure and services in many regions. Most importantly, the mining industry and the closely associated minerals processing industry now supplies about 50% of Australia's export earnings and is therefore central to any strategy to achieve equilibrium in our balance of trade.

Mining activities occupy about 0.2% of the surface area of Australia and have significantly less impact than most other human activities. Inevitably, however, mining often occurs in remote and otherwise untouched areas, and is intensive in its immediate and temporary impacts. Many mining exploration leases occur in national parks. Mining ventures often threaten fragile native environments or occur on traditional Aboriginal land. The environmental standards applying to mining vary from State to State.

10.2 According Congress:

Supports the development of national standards for environmental impact assessment procedures and management standards which are rigorous, comprehensive and give clear and unambiguous signals to mining companies as to what is acceptable practice. Such procedures should cover both the exploration and mining stage.

Endorses the federal government initiative of making minesite rehabilitation expenses tax deductible, and allowing the cost of preparing environmental impact statements to be deducted from operation revenue.

Recognises the role of mining in Australia's future, and calls for the development of specialist land rehabilitation courses at the tertiary education level to improve the level of expertise available.

10.3 Therefore Congress supports the production of national standards for Environmental Impact Statements and a mining industry code of practice.

11. Antarctica

11. The ACTU calls for the creation of a Wilderness Park in Antarctica and as such supports the Federal Government policy on this matter and their efforts to obtain international support.

12. Research and Development Funding

12.1 Congress believes that Australia is well positioned to promote export based industries to focus on environmentally safe manufacturing products and processes.

12.2 Congress supports increases in Government funding to promote such initiatives both from the public and private sector and particularly through the CSIRO. Such funding is to provide a base for export 'environmental products' and environmentally sustainable growth in Australia.

12.3 Further Congress calls on governments, government agencies and the private sector to significantly increase spending on the research and development of pollution prevention and resource conservation techniques and practices, with particular emphasis on:

- Industrial Demonstration projects.
- Educational and training programs
- Policy development studies

Research into technical and non-technical methods of clean production.

13 Local Action

13.1 Congress encourages unions and workers to campaign to change environmentally unsustainable products, practices and processes in their workplaces and believes that such activities will generate new ideas and make a positive contribution to the environment . The Environment and Sustainable Development Sub-Committee will develop a list of such products and processes to be circulated to all affiliated unions along with ideas for campaigns to clean up the workplace.

13.2 Consideration should also be given to pressuring companies to appoint Environmental Officers along similar lines as specialist Safety Officers.

13.3 Congress urges unions to devote more resources to environmental issues and notes that a number of affiliates and ACTU State Branches have appointed specialist environmental officers.

14. Education

14.1 The aim of the trade union movement should be to have the highest environmental standards possible. A key element of achieving such standards is educating people in preventative methods that they can personally follow to improve the environment. This should be a priority in education in schools and training the workplace.

15. Urban Environment

15.1 Australia is a highly urbanised society: most people live in cities. Recent studies have shown that increases in city populations, combined with reductions in investment in public infrastructure and lack

of effective planning have led to deterioration in the quality of the environment and in access to housing education and health services, especially in outer urban areas. This not only has negative social effects, but also undermines productivity and export capacity, through erosion of the health and skills of the workforce.

15.2 Congress recognises the urgent need to improve the urban environment and supports the following objectives:

- Social equity in access to housing, services and a good physical environment
- Environmental sustainability for present and future generations
- Efficient use of infrastructure resources, and provision for a public infrastructure investment program.

15.3 Achievement of these objectives will require implementation of the policies set out below with the co-operation of all levels of government:

15.4 Urban Planning:

A strategic planning approach, with co operation of all levels of government, and involvement of industry unions and community organisations, to co ordinate the location of urban economic and employment development initiatives with housing and service provision. Regional development initiatives, outside the major metropolitan centres, to ensure employment and housing opportunities in regional centres, particularly those affected by structural change. This would assist in limiting urban sprawl, and minimising the impact of urban development on non-urban land. Forward planning for increases in public investment in urban infrastructure, to enable maintenance and development of infrastructure to meet urban planning goals.

15.5 Housing

Recent research has shown that more Australians are experiencing difficulties in finding access to housing. Action is required to increase the supply of housing stock, especially that available to low income earners, through increased investment in public housing. Additional assistance for low income earners to purchase housing is also required. Development of medium density housing initiatives on publicly owned or obsolete industrial land holdings located closer to employment and community services, is required to assist in limiting urban sprawl. This would also reduce infrastructure, housing and transport costs. This requires changes to zoning regulations, and development be accompanied by improved public transport systems and traffic management. New housing standards and regulations are required which incorporate energy efficient features and design. Innovative planning, housing and transport initiatives, like medium density and cluster housing are also required in outer urban areas.

15.6 Transport

Widespread use of private motor vehicles with inadequate resourcing of public transport has led to an overall transport system which is inefficient in its energy use, and contributes to air and noise pollution levels and the greenhouse effect. Congress supports increased investment in publicly owned mass transport systems, including light rail, to enable better and more environmentally safe links between employment, housing education, training, child care and other community services. Serious consideration should be given to limiting the use of private cars in city centres, combined with

improved access through public transport. In residential areas, measures are required to discourage high road traffic volume and speed. Rail links with and between major cities, and between cities and regional centres, should be properly funded and upgraded.

15.7 Clean Air and Water

Unacceptable levels of air pollution and pollution of rivers and coastal seas are now commonplace in our cities. Congress supports stringent standards, monitoring, severe penalties for polluters and programs to improve water and air quality. Measures should be taken to reduce the rate of growth of water consumption, and to upgrade waste and sewerage treatment to prevent contamination of rivers and coasts.

15.8 Waste and Recycling

Current levels of urban waste production and disposal are unsustainable. Accordingly Congress supports measures to:

- reduce industrial and domestic waste through new production techniques and recycling
- reduce and recycle packaging, including through container deposits
- support the development of new techniques in recycling and use of recycled products.
- severely penalise polluters, including through
- measures to compel them to bear clean-up costs
- minimise production of toxic wastes and safely dispose of such wastes
- rehabilitate contaminated land, with costs borne by the polluter.

15.9 Access to Services

Serious inequities exist in access to community services like schools, hospitals, child care, aged care, recreation services, open space and parks. Congress supports a planned program of investment in and decentralised location of these services to ensure equity of access, particularly in outer urban areas and in areas of medium density housing.

16. International

16.1 Congress resolves that as part of its international program the ACTU will work with other international organisations to develop a global response on these environmental issues.

16.2 Environmental issues are interrelated, and are predicated upon a network of exploitative relationships. These are underpinned by attitudes which are deeply entrenched in a psyche of the industrially developed world. Ecologically sustainable development must be approached from a global perspective. However, this does not provide an excuse for domestic inaction. The capacity of any one country to affect significant change in addressing global environmental issues is limited as the environment does not respect national boundaries. We must recognise the global dimension that exists both in environmental and economic terms. Australia is now thoroughly integrated into world markets and our ability to pursue a course of independent economic growth is constrained by international market forces. Industrially developed nations have a particular responsibility because:-

- Much of the environmental destruction has been perpetuated by the exploitative role of Corporations based in industrially developed countries.
- Less developed countries have been unable to break the "cycle of destruction" because of the oppressive debt burden they experience.
- They are often the final market for commodity and goods produced in an ecologically unsustainable manner and therefore effectively act to perpetuate environmentally destructive practices in developing countries.
- In the absence of appropriate monitoring this poses more serious consequences in the freer trade relations being encouraged by the major industrialised nations.

16.3 Congress notes with concern the projections for world population growth and the additional pressure such growth will place on the environment.

16.4 Congress recognises the urgent need for:

The establishment of an effective global and environmental "watch dog", under the auspices of the United

Nations.

That such body include among its principal terms of reference:

- Detailed inquiry into the economic, political and cultural factors which served to perpetuate environmental destruction, in particular the examination of the exploitative role of Transnational Corporations, and the relationship between the mounting debt burden of less developed countries and their dependency upon the "cycle of destruction".
- Establishment of proper global monitoring of environmental destruction.
- Development of appropriate responses on a global scale, including the establishment of guidelines for environmental control, the basis for an international legal framework to restrain and eventually eliminate practices which are environmentally destructive.
- Encourage governments to make necessary funding available for this work, and to provide relief sufficient to
- break the nexus between dependency and the perpetuation of the global practices referred to in this resolution.

16.5 Australia has a natural advantage in resource based and energy intensive industries and it makes sense, on a global scale, for us to continue to fulfil that role. Not to do so would not only disadvantage out international trade at a time when we can least afford it but it may ultimately force other countries to engage in the same activity but in a less economically and environmentally efficient manner.