

Environment and Climate Change

Principles

1. Climate Change is a serious threat to humanity. The scientific evidence is overwhelming:
 - The present and future rise in global temperature is significant and severe. The decade 2001 to 2010 ranked as the warmest on record in Australia and globally since 1850.
 - Human economic activity is contributing to global warming.
 - Today's emissions will affect the climate for decades to come and will have profound economic and social consequences.
2. Unless decisive action is taken now to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and transition to a low carbon economy, the planet we bequeath to future generations will be harsher and more hostile to the human condition than that which we have inherited.
3. As identified in the 2009 policy, climate change will have implications for public health. The predicted increase in extreme weather events will also impact hardest on the poor, working class and most vulnerable in our society and place an ever-increasing demand on fire and other emergency services. The research on climate change by those employed in public institutions will be critical to informing adaptation and mitigation efforts.
4. The ACTU accepts that the cost of not reducing emissions is far higher than that of taking action. Decisive action to reduce emissions, improve energy efficiency, expand renewable energy capacity, and rapidly develop low carbon technologies while creating jobs is essential for continuing sustained economic growth globally and in Australia.
5. The global economy is already switching to a low carbon future. To date, \$980 billion has been invested globally in 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.
6. The private sector will need to change its practices and significantly invest in low carbon and clean energy technologies. However we cannot rely on the private sector to invest at the necessary scale, in a sufficiently integrated fashion, or to ensure a just transition for workers. Substantial public sector investment in

freight transport infrastructure, building energy efficiency and the production of large-scale renewable energy is needed to shift to a low carbon economy.

7. The ACTU, with the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF), has endorsed analysis that says Australia could create at least 770,000 extra jobs by 2030 by taking strong action now to reduce emissions. The job opportunities are across all industries including traditional industries such as agriculture, mining, manufacturing and the services sector. To maximise the job opportunities a price on carbon pollution, a more active industry policy, additional funding for research and development, improved regulatory settings and increased public and private investment are necessary.
8. 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.
9. Internationally and domestically the response must effectively integrate and address the three faces of climate action – the environment, economy and society - in order to promote sustainable development.
10. 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, industrial processes, transport and land use must be modified.
11. The ACTU notes the progress in international negotiations on a comprehensive global agreement, in particular the 2010 and 2011 United Nation negotiations in Cancun and Durban respectively. In Durban, governments agreed to negotiate by 2015 a global agreement – that covers both developed and developing countries – to reduce emissions. We call on the Australian government to constructively engage to facilitate negotiations that will reach a comprehensive agreement by 2017.
12. To ensure continuity in international mitigation action until a new international agreement comes into effect, a decision was taken in Durban to seek second commitments by countries with existing commitments under the Kyoto Protocol (which is due to lapse at the end of 2012). In 2009, Congress congratulated the Government for signing the Kyoto Protocol. In 2012, we call on the Government to commit to a second commitment period under the Kyoto Protocol.
13. Prior to 2015, significantly more work is needed if countries are collectively going to meet the commitment made in Cancun to cap the rise in the earth's temperatures to two degrees; consistent with the science on minimising the impact of climate change. The ACTU supports the scientific independence of Australian climate change researchers. The ACTU urges governments to heed the scientific knowledge and address the gap between current climate action and the science.
14. 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 sectoral levels;
 - c) the promotion of green job opportunities and the greening of existing jobs and industries through public and private 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 their communities;
 - 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.
15. Congress welcomes the establishment in Durban of the Green Climate Fund to support developing countries to effectively respond to climate change. In order to finance the fund, we call on world leaders to commit public financing and support for innovative sources of finance for a just transition that genuinely deals with issues for social justice for the world's poorest and most vulnerable nations.
16. Congress notes that Australian transport unions are committed to supporting, through the International Transport Workers' Federation and the ITUC, the introduction by the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) of a flag blind levy on bunker fuel used by global ships. Revenue raised can contribute to the Green Climate Fund. Transport unions urge the Australian Government to support this position and show leadership on the issue at the IMO.
17. 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. Superannuation funds should be encouraged to invest in these areas, particularly in those that promote Australian industry, infrastructure and jobs.
18. Congress also supports the negotiation of global sectoral agreements covering the world's most emission-intensive industries so that inaction on emission reduction by one country does not assist in a trade advantage. With respect to forestry and agriculture, we call for an urgent process of measurement and the necessary resources to determine sectoral emissions and subsequent offsets for the sectors.

Climate Action

19. The Congress reaffirms its support as outlined in the 2009 Climate Change Policy. A broad based Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS), including transport and forestry and with a strong emissions reduction cap, is one of the essential tools to drive long-term structural changes in the Australian economy.

20. Equally, Congress supports the renewable energy target of 20% by 2020 (MRET) and calls for the necessary investment in renewable energy, energy efficiency and low carbon technologies and therefore new industries and jobs.
21. The ACTU notes, however, that market measures alone are not sufficient to achieve the necessary environmental, social, and economic changes required. Consequently, in addition to an ETS support for research and development, active industry policy and public investment must be significant and complemented by regulation where necessary. Such policy and investment should extend to the promotion of start-up ventures in sourcing clean energy, for example geothermal and tidal.
22. Congress applauds the Government for legislating the Clean Energy Future package in November 2011, which will:
 - a) introduce a carbon price in Australia from 1 July 2012;
 - b) commit to reducing carbon emissions by 80 per cent by 2050;
 - c) provide assistance to emissions-intensive trade exposed industries;
 - d) drive investment in clean energy, low carbon and energy efficiency technology and innovation; and
 - e) provide assistance for the majority of households in meeting costs associated with the introduction of the scheme.
23. The ACTU supports the Clean Energy Future Package that is designed to protect Australian jobs and Australia's economic interests in the transition to a low carbon economy.
24. The ACTU commits to working to maximise the effectiveness and fairness of the Clean Energy Future package in driving the shift to a low carbon economy by:
 - a) representing the jobs and interests of workers in carbon intensive trade exposed industries and electricity generation;
 - b) supporting industries to achieve best of sector standards to remain competitive;
 - c) supporting job growth and both public and private investment in new and associated low carbon industries and services; and
 - d) supporting investment in a regional focus that targets areas from which carbon intensive jobs are at risk, promotes the competitiveness of existing industries and identifies economic diversification opportunities.
 - e) working with the social welfare sector and the renewable energy and energy efficiency industries to ensure energy affordability for low income and working people.

Industry participation

25. To maximise the assistance to Australian manufacturing, the Clean Energy Future package should include rules for Australian industry participation. Congress calls on the Government to apply Australian Industry Participation (AIP) guidelines to projects funded by the Clean Technology Program, the Clean Energy Finance Corporation, and the Australian Renewable Energy Agency.
26. Congress also calls on all governments to adopt procurement policies that promote local production of low carbon goods and services and impose competitive tendering which takes account of transport costs and energy inputs in imported products. Government must also accelerate investment in affected communities, including economic diversification plans.
27. As part of the Clean Energy Future Package, the Government has announced a process to close 2,000 megawatts of highly emissions intensive coal-fired generation capacity by 2020. Congress demands guidelines that ensure job security, require the provision of a range of funded assistance measures for workers, and consultation with trade unions.
28. Congress calls for the introduction of a national energy savings initiative by no later than 2013 to drive investment in energy efficiency measures across the commercial, industrial and residential sectors. Additional measures needed to drive improvements in energy efficiency include regulatory reform, supply chain management, and assistance to low income households and community organisations.
29. We note the Federal Government commitment of approximately \$2 billion to the Carbon Capture and Storage Flagships Program. We call for significantly more investment from industry in order to effectively reduce emissions.
30. Congress welcomes Australian Government initiatives to invest in transport infrastructure aimed at improving the competitiveness and efficiency of all freight transport modes and expanding access to urban public transport. Congress notes that support for the revitalisation of Australian shipping and investment in rail freight will provide options for shippers to shift more of the growing freight market to the less carbon intensive shipping and rail freight modes in freight corridors that are contestable, thereby significantly reducing emissions from freight transport in vital manufacturing supply chains. Congress notes the integration of transport modes to support this aim is essential and urges the Government to increase that investment in fully integrated emission reducing infrastructure and to work with the trade union movement on finding ways to:
 - (a) increase the level of superannuation savings invested in Australian carbon-reducing infrastructure; and
 - (b) maximise the local design, manufacture and maintenance of railway locomotives, rolling stock and ships.

Skills and training

31. Ambitions for sustainable economic development and decent work require associated workforce development, skills and training, including measures to

assist the transition of people and skills between sectors while minimising skills shortages that may emerge as a barrier to investment in new industries.

32. A massive mobilisation of skills and training is needed to both 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.
33. While investment in the skills needed in a low carbon economy has begun, Skills Australia must significantly increase up-skilling opportunities for existing workers and develop a comprehensive 'workforce development plan' for a low carbon economy.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Participation

34. The introduction of the Carbon Farming Initiative, and other programs which innovatively combine traditional land and sea management practice with a low carbon future, presents a significant opportunity for sustainable economic development and employment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
35. Australia must ensure that clean energy future initiatives, processes and programs do 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. Further, governments must ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights, including economic, Native Title and cultural rights, are not impinged upon. Customary land management activities must be respected, training opportunities need to be provided, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people must be engaged in the process to ensure historical processes which have excluded Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander peoples are not repeated.

Climate Action in Workplaces

36. Workplaces need to change how they consume energy and other resources. It is crucial that clear workplace targets for energy efficiency and waste minimisation be linked to industry and national emission and waste reduction strategies. Such targets, and the means of meeting them, can and should be the subject of collective bargaining.
37. Congress re-affirms the union movement's enduring commitment to addressing climate change, including:
 - a) empowering workers and encouraging workplaces to participate in climate action and campaigns for investment in the low carbon economy;
 - b) leading by example in reducing the environmental footprint of our workplaces by taking the necessary steps to reduce our emissions;
 - c) advocating for the adoption by government of a toxic use reduction regime as in the Massachusetts Tax Use Reduction Act;

- d) working 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;
- e) committing to share relevant collective bargaining agreement clauses;
- f) supporting broad-based education programs for workplace delegates and members to educate on the impacts of climate change, solutions to climate change and how union members can act collectively to campaign for solutions; and
- g) working with civil society to build a larger and stronger people's movement of all communities to campaign for urgent and just solutions.

38. The ACTU endorses support for workers' engagement and action on climate change 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 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.