

Union response to The Business Council of Australia – Political alert

In response to the federal government's Green Paper, the Business Council of Australia (BCA) recently released a report encouraging the government to weaken the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme by protecting big polluters and removing incentives to reduce emissions.

This directly undermines the work of progressive unions, environment organisations and civil society, who have long been fighting for a strong and effective scheme which will protect our children's future.

The BCA report argues for 'full compensation' for industries with high emissions intensities and advocates a greenhouse gas reduction target of no higher than 10% by 2020. The big polluters represented by the BCA are attempting to shirk their responsibility to do their fair share to tackle climate change, and instead are making a grab for tax payer handouts.

The science is clear – a target of at least 30% by 2020 is required to secure a safe climate future for our children. This is a science-based, non-negotiable target.

To learn more, see the Climate Action Network Australia website for further information: [http://www.cana.net.au/](http://www.cana.net.au)

Key responses from the environment and labour movement:

“The BCA can't use its own failure to embrace sustainable practices as an excuse. The whole point is to ensure that obstinate businesses that persist with unsustainable practices have to pay for harming our environment. After all, the Emissions Trading Scheme's first purpose is not to make money for polluters – it's about reducing our emissions. The Big polluters in control of the BCA, and are looking backwards rather than looking forwards.” – Alex Scott

Australian Conservation Foundation:

ACF has labelled the BCA's carbon model as 'totally irresponsible', stating that if the BCA's recommendations to the government were adopted, our nation's Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme would fail its key test – effectively reducing carbon pollution, tackling climate change, and protecting future generations.

“Why should big wealthy polluters be let off the hook, leaving average Australians to bear the burden? Polluting industries that have spent the last decade doing little or nothing to prepare for a carbon-constrained economy

should not get a free kick,” said ACF executive director Don Henry.

“The Business Council's proposal is totally irresponsible and would produce a complicated, weak scheme, full of exemptions and loopholes.

“It is critical the current debate around the economic impact of emissions trading is informed by facts and robust analysis, not exaggeration and scare tactics,” Mr Henry said.

CSIRO modelling shows Australia's economy will still double in size by 2030 and triple by 2050 if the country takes effective action on climate change.

ACTU president Sharan Burrows:

“Unfortunately some of the big polluting industries and corporations don't want to take responsibility for reducing their emissions and are seeking exemptions from the carbon pollution reduction scheme. It is a selfish and short-sighted approach on their part. We want them to be part of the solution to a cleaner economy.”

Climate Institute CEO John Connor: “The proposals from the BCA to have taxpayers fill the gap between a modest trajectory for Australian business and a credible global target just slugs the rest of us and future generations with a ballooning carbon debt and a high carbon economy.”

Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS), Gregor Macfie:

“We need to act strongly on climate change now and the costs and benefits of action should be shared fairly across the community. ACOSS would be very concerned if the burden were to fall on lower income and disadvantaged households as a result of other sections of the community not pulling their weight .“

Australian Youth Climate Coalition (AYCC) Co-Director Amanda McKenzie:

“Say I'd been dumping the rubbish from my business in the local tip for years. It's been great for me, increasing my profitability. However after some years the tip starts to smell rancid, it is affecting the health of children at a nearby school and the community can no longer use the creek behind it for fishing or swimming. The council decides that they will take action and lets everyone know about it. For 20 years there are consultations and discussions and I am particularly vocal. They then announce that in a further two years they will impose a cost on dumping in the tip. I am outraged and demand compensation from the community. I argue that as I have had a free

ride for so long I should continue to have it. What would you say to me?"

What should the BCA be doing instead of whingeing?

According to the new Southern Cross Climate Coalition, a coalition of the ACTU, the Climate Institute, ACF and ACOSS, big polluters need to stop seeking unfair special deals and delays to action on climate change and get on with low carbon solutions.

Australia has excellent renewable energy resources and great opportunities to raise our energy efficiency to cut energy waste - we're will prosper in a clean, low-carbon economy.

Australia, and particularly Queensland, can be a leader in solar energy, creating new jobs, new companies and new revenue from a booming clean energy economy that builds a better future for our kids.

The BCA needs to step up and catch up with the times rather than continuing to delay. The longer we delay action, the more it will cost our kids, our environment and our economy.

A strong and well-designed ETS will reward innovative companies that are doing the right thing and help to level the playing field by ensuring that polluters pay their fair share.

The big polluters need to embrace the 'sustainability revolution' and prepare to change the way that business is done - just like the industrial and information-technology revolutions of the past.

Australia won't be a credible player on the global stage unless we have a strong emissions trading scheme with active participation from our business sector.

Gerry Hueston, President of BP Australasia, differed markedly from the position of the BCA, demonstrating the division within the business community between those firms that are willing to embrace change and those that are trying to resist. Mr Hueston stated that the government's Green Paper provided the direction on Australia's response to climate change that business requires – a clear signal of commitment to early action based on market mechanisms.

"It has the potential to deliver a competitive advantage to Australia... Now is certainly not the time to be mired down in unproductive arguments... [we need to] acknowledge that the broad principles in the Green Paper are sound."

What you can do:

Industry lobbyists are currently in overdrive trying to protect their special interests rather than simply seeking solutions.

Meanwhile, the vast majority of Australians are willing and ready to be part of a national transition to a clean, renewable energy economy. We need to ensure that the citizen's voice is strongest and be active citizens in our democracy.

Call and write letters to your MP on the issue, or even better, see the QPSU's lobbying kit on climate change and make an appointment to visit your MP!

In addition, speak out in your community and talk to those around you – the more Australians who are aware of the politics around our national solution to climate change, the greater pressure we can exert on our representatives.