

Lobbying kit for real action on climate change



Background

Over the past few months, Australians have been in dialogue with their leaders about an effective emissions trading scheme to save our climate and protect our way of life.

During last year's federal election, QPSU members and Australians in general said loud and clear that they wanted real, effective climate action. And they voted for it.

In July, at QPSU's Garnaut Teleconference with over 200 union members participating from around the state, a motion was unanimously passed that the union's policy development on Climate Change begin, through our new Climate Committee.

We want our politicians to develop a scheme that:

- Reduces Australia's carbon emissions as quickly and effectively as possible.
- Recognises our important role as a developed country with high per-capita emissions in taking the lead in any global carbon reduction effort.
- Fairly distributes the burden of shifting to a low-carbon economy by sharing it between all sectors – no exemptions, no free passes.
- Ensures that workers don't lose out, by subsidising renewable, green energy production that will help keep costs down for families.

The federal government's release of its "Green paper" (ie. options paper) on an ETS is an important step in our politicians' acknowledging what we all realised long ago – we must start building a sustainable, low-carbon future for Australia.

Unfortunately, the Green paper as it currently stands is seriously compromised by delay, shielding of vested interests and coal producers, and inefficient subsidies. QPSU members are ready to stand up for future generations and ensure that the Australian Emissions Trading Scheme is strong and effective at reducing emissions.

We need to let our representatives know that half-measures won't cut it.

The 'Real Action' lobbying kit

This kit has been developed so that we can exert maximum political pressure at a crucial time for our climate. Major decisions are about to be made on the design of Australia's Emissions Trading Scheme, our Emissions Reduction Targets, and the positions that our country will take into the UN negotiations which will be finalized in Copenhagen in 2009. Now is the crucial time to be applying grassroots political pressure.

That's why union members across the state are forming delegations to go and see their Federal MPs.

This kit should provide you with the tools you need to arrange a meeting with your local MP, present our case at the meeting, and report back the outcomes of the meeting.

Together we can make a real difference.

Political lobbying- 4 tips

All successful political campaigns have a few things in common. By following a few simple steps we can maximise our chances of success.

Tip one

Know your target

For an issue like climate change, with such a uniquely long-term outlook, it is valuable to lobby both decision-makers and those in opposition, as we need bipartisan support for decades into the future, well beyond political cycles. However, the approach that you take may be different depending on which side of parliament your local MP sits.

Governments have the power to make decisions, oppositions do not. Governments have been elected by the people, and their job is to represent the views of the people – they need to hear your views so that they can represent you properly. Oppositions tend to hold views that are out of step with public thinking, and they should want to learn your views so that they can better represent you and try to gain your support at a future election. If the opposition comes to a more progressive viewpoint, it can push the government to go even further towards the necessary goals – a race towards a better outcome.

Lobbying Kit (continued)

Tip two

ALWAYS be polite, professional and courteous.

No matter how outrageous the decision a government has taken, or their attitude towards the people who are campaigning against them, you are never going to influence someone by being abusive or impolite.

Tip three

PRACTICE makes perfect.

It is understandable for people to be nervous or anxious before a meeting. In fact, it would be rare if people weren't a little nervous. The best way to overcome

these nerves and have a successful meeting is to practice what you are going to say beforehand. Try it with a family member, friend or a colleague.

Tip four

TAKE notes.

It is very hard to remember everything that is said during a meeting. It is a good idea to assign someone the role of note-taker.

Meeting notes

For our campaign to be successful, it is important that everyone across the state is going in with the same message and asking for the same thing. But for an issue as big as climate change, there are so many complex issues involved. That is why we have developed the following meeting notes for people to follow.

1. Introduction

Start off by introducing the group and the fact that you are:

- Worried about the impacts of climate change on our state's, nation's, and planet's future – our children's future – and not only environmentally, but economically as well.
- Not proud of Queensland's contribution to climate change – per capita we are the highest emitting state in Australia, and also a massive coal exporter.
- Interested in ensuring that government at all levels makes the right decisions about dangerous climate change at this important time
- Want the member to support training initiatives for Green Jobs and greater funding for public transport initiatives

2. Concerns

Explain to the MP what members are concerned about, and ask key questions to get a response:

- The highest-emitting industries in the Green paper given 90% of their permits for free, while lower emitters need to purchase every permit. This greatly reduces the incentive to actually emit less carbon pollution.
- Why is the revenue raised from the scheme being directed towards inefficient subsidies for coal, and petrol excises, instead of investing in renewable energy, public transport, and re-training for the green economy? We are ready for a transition now and want the government to invest in the future, not the past.
- The 2020 target will be Australia's national goal on climate change for the next decade. If we set a weak goal, we will end up "treading water" for the next decade without going anywhere! A strong target will mean everybody has to pitch in and do their bit, to help Australia move to renewable energy, smarter buildings and cleaner cars.
- Workers want rewarding jobs in industries that don't harm the planet. Would you support investing revenue from the emissions trading scheme in skills for a new green economy, particularly by promoting 'green collar' jobs through federal support for TAFE training programs in states?
- Workers and their families need to have the choice available to travel sustainably – in many places it's simply not a realistic option. Do you support investing revenue from the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme into the state's public transport and infrastructure, to ensure that workers have that choice available?

3. What we are looking for

Tell the member what we are looking for:

- Australia needs to set a strong target to cut greenhouse pollution by at least 30% by 2020, in line with what the science tells us.
- Our children are counting on your support to make the emissions trading scheme and other climate policies to be as strong as they can be – and that means standing up to lobbyists whose industries have had more than 10 years to prepare for its introduction!

Then ask the question:

Can we count on your support?

Lobbying Kit (continued)

Things they are likely to say

Key climate questions that we think your MP might ask, or that they are already saying in the media.

Household costs & petrol prices – ‘We don’t want to do anything that will hurt the family budget’

- The real solutions to petrol prices are cleaner cars and public transport. Use an example from your own community – do you need better public transport or bike paths?
- Let’s invest in helping working families by make it easier to access solar panels, energy efficient appliances, and insulation, to reduce energy bills – especially by providing assistance to retrofit old homes.
- I am willing to pay more for electricity/petrol if Australia is effectively reducing its emissions to help secure a future for our children. I wouldn’t be happy to pay more if our emissions continued to increase – we need a fair AND effective response.

‘A 30% reduction in carbon pollution by 2020 would destroy our economy’ OR ‘Power stations will go broke and shut down.’

- If we don’t achieve these sorts of reductions as a globe, the effects of climate change will destroy our economy. We have to act now.
- This is what the science tells us that we need. 3000 of the world’s best scientists on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) say that wealthy countries like Australia need to reduce emissions by 25-40% by 2020.

‘We need to be slow and steady’ OR ‘We’ve on track to meet our Kyoto target...We are spending \$X billion on climate change programs.’

- Climate Change is a crisis and we’re on the brink of committing ourselves to dangerous, runaway climate change. We can’t delay further.
- “if we wait to see if an ailment is indeed fatal, we will do nothing until we are dead.” (Tim Flannery, ‘The Weather Makers’)
- The IPCC has indicated that global emissions need to peak by 2015 and decrease by 2-3% per year, every year after that, until 2050. 2015 is only 7 years away.
- During World War II, between 30% and 60% of the GDP of western nations was spent on war efforts, to secure a safe future – climate change is a comparable danger, but nowhere near the same scale of commitments are yet being seen.

‘Australia is only a small player and a small contributor to the problem. China & India are the real problem and we’re working closely with them.’

- Australia has to play its part as well. I would be proud to live in a country that took world-leading action on climate change.
- If a relatively small but very wealthy country like Australia can’t reduce its emissions rapidly, how can we credibly ask poor but large countries like China and India to do the same?
- The average Australian is responsible for about 13 times as much carbon pollution as the average Indian, and 6 times the average person in China. We are also much wealthier – so it should be easier for us to reduce our emissions.

What about jobs? - ‘The coal industry employs so many people, we need to protect it.’ OR ‘It will cost the economy.’

- Many feared that computers would displace thousands of workers from their jobs and that widespread unemployment would result, but the result was instead a more efficient, productive workforce with new jobs emerging in fields which previously did not even exist. The same can happen with a just transition to a clean, renewable economy.
- New renewable energy and new, clean jobs means a better future for our children.
- If don’t transition to a renewable future and irreversible climate change occurs, think of all the jobs that will be lost – tourism and fishing on the Great Barrier Reef, farmers in the Murray Darling Basin, and so on.

“I’m a climate sceptic.”

- Just like the link between smoking and lung cancer, don’t you think it pays to err on the side of caution, especially when the stakes are so high?
- The vast majority of Australians are extremely concerned about climate change and want to see a response that is based on science, not politics. It’s about our children’s future.
- If your MP is a known climate sceptic, contact us and we will help you to research your MP’s particular views and prepare yourself with the right information.

Contact:

For more info and support, or to connect with other citizen lobbyists in your area, email QPSU organiser Mitch Hart at mch@qpsu.org.au