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An Open Letter to the Prime Minister

The Hon John Howard MP
Prime Minister
Canberra

Dear Prime Minister,

On 5 June 2002, in answering a question without notice in Parliament you said:

"It is not in Australia's interests to ratify the Kyoto Protocol. . . the Protocol would cost us jobs and damage our economy. That is why the Australian government will continue to oppose ratification."

The Leader of the Opposition, Simon Crean, then interjected, and you responded to him with these words

"It amazes me that a Labor Party that claims, from time to time, to represent the interests of the working men and women of this country would sign an arrangement that would hurt this country... The Australian national interest does not lie in ratifying Kyoto: that is why we are opposed to it."

In stating these obvious truths you dealt a blow to the hopes of some elements of the Canberra bureaucracy, whose career aspirations had been transformed at the prospect of Australia becoming part of an international bureaucracy, with extraordinary powers of inspection and control over the domestic economies of the member states of the Kyoto Protocol.

On 5 June 2002, you ensured that Australia retained its sovereignty with respect to policies on decarbonisation. However, the debate on global warming, de-carbonisation, and Australia's future as a growing, prosperous and influential nation continues within the government, within the bureaucracy, and within the community at large. It is indeed unfortunate that because of the ready access to substantial public funds which the global warming protagonists enjoy, it has been a one-sided debate.

It is understood that cabinet has recently been asked to approve expenditures which will allow the Australian Greenhouse Office and their colleagues in other departments to conduct economic research into the consequences for Australia of

- (a) the introduction of a carbon tax; or alternatively,
- (b) the introduction of an emissions trading scheme whereby consumers of fossil fuels such as brown and black coal, diesel and other liquid fuels, and natural gas will be required to buy permits to emit carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. (This is a carbon tax under another name, but the difference here is that traders will make money by buying and selling these government-issued permits, just as brokers earn a percentage in buying and selling taxi-cab licences.)

If the Australian government should adopt either of these proposals, our energy costs will rise. In particular, electricity costs could increase by as much as 50 percent (depending on the severity of the carbon tax). Our international competitiveness, which is based in large measure on low-cost energy, would be seriously affected.

The Europeans who have championed the Kyoto Protocol and the regime of de-carbonisation which is the essence of the Protocol, together with their supporters in Australia, would have us believe that by reducing the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere by an almost imperceptible amount (through the establishment and enforcement of an international treaty), we can influence the world's climate. This notion is, quite simply, a fantasy. W R Kininmonth, former head of Australia's National Climate Centre, has said:

"Any suggestion that implementation of the Kyoto Protocol will avoid future damage from weather and climate extremes is a grand delusion."

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the United Nations body established to give advice on prospective carbon dioxide emissions and their alleged impact on the world's climate, has ignored the abundance of scientific evidence and advice which is contrary to the message of human guilt and climatic punishment which it wishes to convey. In particular the IPCC cannot bring itself to acknowledge that there has been substantial natural variability in the world's climate. The IPCC has gone to extraordinary lengths to seek to deny the significance of the Mediaeval Warming Period, (900 to 1300 AD) and the Little Ice Age, (1300 to 1900 AD) which were climatic events of great importance in world history. Astro-physicists now argue that these events were driven by solar perturbations, arguments ignored by the IPCC. The IPCC has also assumed almost unimaginable rates of economic growth in the developing world, in order to artificially boost their astonishing predictions of world growth in anthropogenic emissions of carbon dioxide during the next century.

Solar perturbations will continue to have a long-term influence, perhaps dominant influence, on our climate and there is nothing that we can do about that. We should, of course, continue our research into all of the factors, direct and indirect solar influences, oceanic heat transportation, atmospheric energy transfers, and others, which can influence climate change.

But the admission, by the most committed greenhouse protagonists, that even if the Kyoto Protocol were to come into full effect, it would have no discernible effect on climate, should not be swept aside. For example, on the ABC's 7:30 Report on 13 November 2000, Dr Graham Pearman AO, then Head of the CSIRO Division of Atmospheric Research, referring to atmospheric CO₂ concentrations and their impact on global climate said,

"The reality of the Protocol as it is at the moment is that even if all of the nations were able to achieve those targets it would hardly make any difference."

Australia's contribution, then, would make no difference, at all, to this already indiscernible result. Why should Australia, having joined the US in refusing to be party to a Treaty based on scientific and economic arguments which are strenuously contested by a growing number of eminent scientists and economists, continue to consider measures which will make us much less competitive than our trading partners; particularly when such measures would impact heavily on the poorer sections of Australian society.

Prime Minister, your response on 5 June 2002 was based on sound judgment, and on a concern for Australian workers and Australian industries which depend on low-cost energy for their competitiveness. We urge you to back your judgement and your concerns with a directive to the bureaucrats who seek to undermine your policy to cease and desist.

Yours sincerely

Peter Walsh
President.