

CHECK OUT



CCJP
CATHOLICS IN COALITION FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE

August 2013

Election 2013 – Policy Positions: Climate Change

This is the 5th in a series of CCJP Check Outs on key Election Policy issues.

"The Angry Summer"

The startling facts about our hottest summer on record, according to a new report by the Australian Government Climate Commission.

HEAT

- January 2013 was the hottest month on record for Australia.
- Heatwave and temperature records were broken across the country, with 44 weather stations recording their hottest ever maximum temperatures
- Hottest day ever recorded for Australia as a whole (40.3°C, January 7 2013)

- Much of Australia was drier than normal in mid-2012, with record lowest rainfall from July-Dec in central South Australia
- Lowest monthly rainfall records broken in many weather stations

DRY

- Major flooding throughout QLD and northern NSW.
- 26 daily rainfall records were broken across Australia

RAIN+ FLOODS

- Tropical Cyclone Oswald caused extreme rains over QLD and northern NSW, as well as high waves & flooding.
- Tropical Cyclone Rusty threatened the Pilbara coast with severe wind & rainfall.

TROPICAL CYCLONES

BUSHFIRES

- "One of the worst fire days on record for NSW" - NSW Rural Fire Services Commissioner.
- Bushfires in every state and territory, with very damaging fires in NSW and Tasmania.
- On January 4, up to 40 bushfires occurred in Tasmania. Over 25,000 hectares were burnt and up to 200 properties destroyed.
- On January 8, fires raged across NSW with up to 140 separate incidents reported.

All data: Climate Commission. Report: *The Angry Summer*, 2013. Australian Government, Canberra.

IN 2013, Australia will vote for a Federal Leader: One of the most pressing issues that this leader will oversee is Australia's response to a changing climate, with the directions taken in the coming few years having a make-or-break role in securing sustainability, security and a continued enjoyment of all that creation has offered us. Your vote will affect not only the federal election, but the way Australia approaches the burning question of climate change and the future of our environment. Climate change has been identified by both the WHO & UN as one of the most pressing modern dangers to human health, already causing hundreds of thousands of deaths per year. In 2012, researchers at the UN Rio+20 conference revealed that the number of malnourished women & children could increase by 20%; affecting every 1 in 5 within 10 yrs, as a direct result of climate change.

This means that now is the time to act!

LABOR

The ALP government hopes to remind the voting public of all the environment-related legislation they have passed in the last term, and to continue building on this foundation. But will these measures be strong enough to safeguard Australia's environment?

GREEN CORRIDORS: This policy aims to ensure the resilience of our nation's ecosystem against the inevitability of climate change, backed by a \$10 million investment. Creating protected wildlife corridors across the country would encourage the migration and proliferation of species, meaning biodiversity and therefore stronger ecosystems. This plan has been welcomed by the Australian Conservation Foundation, but may require further funding to provide adequate compensation to affected farmers.

THE CARBON PRICE: The revenue raised from the carbon price will continue to be used to reduce income tax and increase pension and welfare payments. By targeting Australia's major emitters, the price on carbon encourages industries to invest in sustainable energy and aims for a fairly modest 5% cut of carbon emissions (as they were in 2000) by 2020. However, many have criticised Labor's failure to stand up to big industry in order to achieve a lasting result.

OTHER INITIATIVES: include tax breaks for green buildings, a program to get more renewable energy into Australian homes and businesses, emissions standards for new cars and rewards to encourage industries to take early action on reducing emissions.

COALITION

Wishing to increase the competitiveness of Australia's industries (for example, mining), the Coalition's plans

ABOLITION OF THE CARBON TAX: Leading members of the Liberal party have repeatedly stated that repealing the carbon tax would be their first action taken should they win the election. This tax has been denounced by the party as financially harmful to Australians, despite a significantly lower-than-expected impact on the cost of living and compensation for those in low income brackets.

DIRECT ACTION PLAN: After abolishing the carbon tax, the Coalition government would implement its Direct Action Plan, which also aims to cut carbon emissions by 5% by 2020. The focus of this plan is **carbon sequestration** (storing carbon in underground reservoirs), which is a cost-intensive, energy-intensive and potentially dangerous program, according to the CSIRO. The plan also involves a \$3 billion **emissions reduction fund**, focusing on sustainability in Australia only, as opposed to a global approach.

GREEN ARMY: This program intends to shift responsibility for the environment to a team of 15000 workers Australia-wide, charged with clean-up projects and conservation. The team, which has yet to be recruited, would be made up predominantly of young people acting alongside local councils.

Green's

With climate change as one of their primary concerns, the Australian Greens Party wishes to ensure that Australia has the strongest possible policy in this area. However, the funding for these projects must be balanced with the nation's other needs.

"MAKE POLLUTERS PAY": The Greens are strong supporters of a price on emissions, and of ensuring that this price reflects the social and environmental cost. Additionally, the party is less interested in the competitiveness of the mining and fossil fuel sectors, and more on the burgeoning renewables market. As such, the Greens stipulate that financial aid given to the former industry sport sectors. in the form of subsidies should be relocated to the renewable energy, energy efficiency and sustainable tran

ENERGY EFFICIENCY: efforts to reduce the amount of energy used to produce goods & perform services, is a major focus of the policy. They call for a national system of targets to work toward greater efficiency, and strict Minimum Energy Performance Standards for buildings, infrastructure & products.

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE: The Greens plan to demand the strengthening of Australia's agricultural industry through local & community engagement, as well as the implementation of a national strategic plan for sustainable agriculture that will consider the health of ecosystems in the production of our food. Such a plan involves protection of agricultural land from competing interests, such as **coal seam gas extraction**.

"CLIMATE CHANGE IS A SIGNIFICANT AND EMERGING THREAT TO PUBLIC HEALTH, AND CHANGES THE WAY WE MUST LOOK AT PROTECTING VULNERABLE POPULATIONS"

World Health Organisation, 2009, *Climate Change and Human Health*.

The Climate Commission report *The Critical Decade: Extreme Weather* (released on April 3 2013) examined links between Australia's extreme weather and human-induced climate change. It found natural events were being influenced by climate change...**99% of climate scientists agreed that our climate is changing and humans are contributing.**

Sources:

- 1) CLRI NSW – Watermark Newsletter. Visit - <http://clri NSW.org/>
- 2) The Climate Commission report *The Critical Decade: Extreme Weather*.