

# **SOUTH AUSTRALIAN DEMOCRATS**

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## ***Climate Change***

***Platform Paper  
2006 South Australian  
Election***



***'still keeping the bastards honest'***

# **CLIMATE CHANGE**

## **Foreword**

In 1998, the Democrats in South Australia were the first political party in Australia to initiate public discussion on the impacts of the greenhouse effect.

Significant increases in CO<sub>2</sub> are being measured and changes in climate are occurring at a rate that has not been experienced on earth for a million years. While it is not provable that this is the predicted "greenhouse effect", in 2005 Australia and South Australia experienced the hottest year since recording began almost a century ago.

Nevertheless the rates of climate change around the world appear to be increasing, with the tundra melting and glaciers receding.

With a predicted temperature increase between 1 and 6 degrees by 2070, the implications of climate change are scary. Without decisive action, forget the wine industry, and expect species extinction. Forget beaches and expect urban flooding.

We can anticipate more tropical diseases in South Australia and increased outbreaks of diseases such as Ross River Fever.

There will be more storms, less winter rain, and more summer rain which of course evaporates, resulting in less water being available in dams and reservoirs.

Goyder's line will move south, reducing the area available for agriculture.

Acting on the Precautionary Principle, we should be taking strong actions to limit the production of greenhouse gases (GHGs).

It is disappointing therefore that, after four years in Government, the Labor Party began public consultation on developing a greenhouse strategy less than 6 months ago. The plan to have a plan has begun!

With the Australian Government stubbornly refusing to meet the targets of the Kyoto Protocol, it has become even more important for South Australia to have its own.

Because climate change threatens our very existence, we have to start cutting greenhouse gas production now.

## **Greenhouse gas abatement**

*Along with the SA Democrats, both Labor and Liberal parties have announced that they aim to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 60% by 2050.*

The problem we have now is that the target set is too far off to concentrate the minds of policy makers. What is needed is a series of interim targets to get us moving. We are proposing a 10 per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2010 and a 25 per cent target by 2020.

The SA Democrats call on the State Government to set a legislated target of reducing GHG emissions by 60% by 2050, and to set specific targets for 2010 (10%), 2020 (25%), 2030 and 2040 as part of achieving that goal, and to place this in a legislative framework.

***South Australia is dragging the chain in action to reduce GHGs from electricity utilities: New South Wales implemented a Greenhouse Gas Abatement Scheme in 2003, the Australian Capital Territory in 2005, requiring electricity retailers to meet mandatory targets in reduction of GHG emissions.***

*The South Australian Democrats call on the state government to implement a greenhouse gas abatement scheme in the next term of parliament.*

## **Sustainable energy**

The State Government's strategic plan says that it is the responsibility of "all South Australians" to "increase their use of renewable energy so that it comprises 15% of total electricity consumption within 10 years", but all South Australians do not have the financial wherewithal to do this.

However, this is something of a wishlist as the Government is not making it mandatory. The Government must provide assistance in a number of ways to make this happen.

Solar makes sense. It is power that is generated at the time of greatest need, when peak demand is likely to be at its highest. If encouraged, this has the potential to alleviate the electricity shortfall and blackouts that South Australia faces each summer.

**The SA Democrats say there are three principal ways through which the state government should assist South Australians in reaching this 15% target:**

- a photovoltaic (PV) rebate scheme,

- a feed-in tariff for those sending power back into the grid, and
  - a state-based MRET scheme,
- and it is the essential base of the Democrats' strategies to deal with climate change.

If the South Australian Government was to supplement the current tariff paid to consumers feeding sustainable power back into the grid, not only would we benefit in terms of encouraging people to install PV power systems, it could turbo-charge an emerging solar manufacturing and installation industry in this state.

Feed-in tariffs for PV-generated electricity must be higher than the distributed electricity price on the basis of its benefit - this is electricity that is not requiring the construction of new generators, transformers and power-lines, and which does not have the greenhouse impact of electricity manufactured from coal, gas or oil.

Germany provides an excellent model with its Electricity Feed-in Law implemented in 2003. The buyback rate of 57 cents/kWh diminishes each year by 5%. The scheme generated high demand and gave an enormous boost to the solar manufacturing and installation industry. It is because of that growth, and the subsequent reduction in the price of PV cells, that the buyback rate is diminished each year.

The South Australian Government has a subsidy available for solar hot-water systems, for which we commend them. However, the next step must be for a state-based scheme to further encourage and assist the growth of PV power. Germany again provides the example.

Beginning in 1998, its "100,000 Roofs" Program ended in 2003 when it was fully subscribed. It gave 10 year, low-interest loans for consumers installing PV systems.

The consequence of both the Feed-in Law and the 100,000 Roofs Program has been one billion dollars of manufacturing investment, with more than 10,000 people employed in production, distribution and installation of solar equipment.

On 12<sup>th</sup> January this year, California decided to implement a program, the California Solar Initiative (CSI) which would result in the installation of PV systems on a million rooftops in that US State between 2006 and 2016.

The CSI will provide a subsidy of approximately one-third of the cost for a PV rooftop system with the installation of more than 300 MW. This has the potential to not build up to 5 fossil-fuel burning power stations, thereby saving the state up to \$18.2 billion.

In that same time period 61,000 job years will be created in the manufacturing sector of the solar industry, and 40,000 job years in the installation/maintenance sector, thus giving a powerful boost to the economy.

If the South Australian Government is serious about climate change and a commitment to ecologically sustainable energy then it should introduce a state-based MRET scheme to make up this shortfall. This would drive growth in the solar, wind and geothermal energy sectors.

The Victorian Premier announced in November that his government is investigating

the set up of a state-based MRET scheme. If South Australia does not take up the challenge, investors in ecologically sustainable energy may well choose to set up in Victoria instead. South Australia must seize this opportunity before Victoria does.

The opportunities for investment in renewable energy has huge potential during this century.

To ensure South Australia profits from this investment opportunity, we propose the establishment of an Ecologically Sustainable Energy Authority (EASA).

ESEA would be charged with the responsibility of -

- minimising greenhouse gas emissions;
- minimising the use of non-renewable energy sources;
- minimising energy use; and
- optimising the use of ecologically-sustainable energy sources.

## *Sustainable housing*

The average Australian home produces 15 tonnes per annum of greenhouse gases.

Yet despite this, South Australia has seen an outbreak of Adam houses – still looking for eaves! It is amazing, given all the warning signs we have had about climate change and electricity demand, that such buildings are still being allowed by state and local governments.

*Just as we have 3 or 4 or 5 star energy ratings on electrical goods, such as fridges, we should have energy ratings on new buildings. It is concerning that the state government's draft greenhouse strategy proposes "the use of voluntary green building rating tools". It is not the use of such tools, but the suggestion that they be voluntary that is an issue.*

The NSW Government has implemented BASIX (the Building Sustainability Index) and made it mandatory for all new buildings.

The SA Democrats call on our government to follow suit.

**The South Australian Democrats want building regulations amended so that, from 2010, all new buildings and extensions to existing buildings would have to meet suitable energy efficiency standards.** Each new building, on the basis of floor space, would be required to use 25% less energy than the average building of that type in that area currently uses.

When houses are sold, information on the energy efficiency of the house would be provided at point of sale.

Tenants in rental accommodation are able to exercise limited flexibility in reducing

their demands on the energy system, as it is the landlords who decide what hot water system will be supplied, whether external blinds are installed, whether the home heating is gas or electricity.

The Government should offer incentives to landlords who install environmentally friendly electrical appliances.

***When existing electric hot water services in Housing Trust stock need replacing, the Government should require the Trust, as a matter of policy, to replace them with solar hot-water systems.***

## ***Sustainable transport***

**In recognition of the problems associated with climate change and greenhouse gas obligations, greater efforts must be made to decrease use of the private car and increase the use of public transport.**

The extension of the Glenelg line to Adelaide Railway station, was part of the SA Democrats' 2002 state election platform, and now that the Government has agreed with us, this should be only a beginning in giving commuters greater choice in moving about the metropolitan area. The tramline must be further extended.

**The Government should consult widely to determine the best tram routes, particularly to ensure coverage to areas that currently are not serviced by a dedicated transport route.**

**The South Australian Democrats believe the line should be extended in the first instance to Adelaide Airport, then in the longer term to:**

- o North Adelaide
- o Norwood
- o north from Glenelg to the Airport and thence to the city as a circle line
- o West Lakes and Footy Park, after conversion of the Outer Harbour line to light rail.

*The South Australian Democrats support the extension of the Noarlunga rail line to Seaford and, in the longer term to Victor Harbor.*

We also advocate the extension of the Gawler line to the Barossa Valley. **The line is currently used by the Penrice "stone train" but this industry has limited life and, within a decade or less, it will no longer be used for that purpose. As a first step in extending the Gawler line for suburban passenger rail transport, the South Australian Democrats seek a guarantee from the State Government that the line will be retained when the stone train stops operating.**

**We are concerned at the amount of urban development on the fringe of Adelaide where no dedicated public transport routes have been set aside: it all but guarantees that people in new sub-divisions will have to be totally car-reliant.** We therefore propose a commuter train service linking Roseworthy to Gawler.

***The SA Democrats have backed the concept of a new rail freight route to bypass the Adelaide Hills, which would enable the commuter rail service between Adelaide and Belair to once again be able operate to Bridgewater and, with proper planning, to Mount Barker and even Murray Bridge.***

*Consideration should be given to changing the system of car registration to include a levy to go towards better public transport, cycling and pedestrian facilities. This levy would apply only to those drivers using cars in the metropolitan area initially, but as public transport develops (redevelops) in rural cities, the residents in those cities would also pay that levy.*

A levy should also be considered for car park use with the money being directed towards the same things.

The Government needs to consider the introduction of HOV (**high-occupancy vehicle**) lanes for buses and cars that carry two or more people, with heavy fines for those who abuse the system.

Bicycle paths should be mandated in all new housing sub-divisions, more rail cars should be modified to carry extra bikes, and bicycle racks should be provided on suburban buses.

## ***Urban planning***

Transit-oriented developments should be required in all new urban subdivisions. **Such sensible planning would require higher density housing (up to four storey height) to be located close to the stations/stops of the metropolitan tram lines, urban passenger train lines, and the O-Bahn busway. Heights of buildings would reduce as their distance from the stations/stops increases.**

Zoning around transit-oriented developments should be mixed use so that commercial and office type jobs are closer to where people live. **By definition they would be designed to be far more pedestrian and cycle friendly than at present.**

All new housing developments must be required to set aside land for mass-transit corridors.

There are future problems in regard to sea-level rise which are not being addressed in the building approvals processes of local councils. This has been exacerbated by the 'sea-change' phenomenon, with greater demands being placed on coastal land. In many cases, these changes have come too quickly to allow proper consideration and planning by Councils.

The SA Democrats call on the Government to prepare a Coastal Plan Amendment Report to cover all South Australian coasts.

## **Water**

Australia's conservative Federal Government, in its report *Climate change: risk and vulnerability*, anticipates that all of southern Australia will have decreased rainfall and runoff, and that temperatures will rise with associated increases in evaporation, none of which augurs well for South Australia and its water supplies.

Once again, in the light of such information, calls for population increase must be rejected.

*The River Murray is the principal water source for South Australia, but it is water shared through the Murray-Darling Basin with Queensland, NSW, Victoria and the ACT, and we are the last to get our less than fair share of it.*

*The Australian Greenhouse Office says that by 2030, River Murray flows will have decreased by 20%, and at the same time salinity will be increasing. Estimates suggest that water from the Murray will be above WHO salinity standards 40% of the time.*

*In the next 50 years the losses as a result of climate change will be four times that of our current total usage.*

***The SA Democrats argue for the whole of the Murray-Darling Basin to be brought under the control of the Federal Government. In this way some of the profligate use of water on cotton and rice farms in other states will have more chance of being brought under control.***

## ***Biodiversity***

Creating links between ecosystems, both east to west and north to south, has great importance given the implications for climate change, and the subsequent need for linked corridors to allow movement of fauna for climate adaptation. If such corridors are not created, then animals will effectively be marooned within diminishing islands of vegetation. Such a program must have adequate resourcing from Government.

## ***Adaptation Strategies***

*In a report released last year, the Australian Greenhouse Office says we must have adaptation strategies which take into account the implications of climate change in all our decision-making.*

*The implications of climate-change are such that new emergency response plans must be developed. These will need to take into account:*

- *Sudden scarcity in or dramatic price increases of oil*
- *the prospect of increased number and intensity of bushfires as a consequence of higher temperatures*
- *decreased periods of time available for controlled burning*
- *deaths of elderly people due to heat extremes.*

## ***CONCLUSION***

There is much more to be done. The time for talk is over. As Don Dunstan said a decade ago "We intervene, or we sink". Perhaps even quite literally.

**Check our record at  
[www.sa.democrats.org.au](http://www.sa.democrats.org.au)**