



## **ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENDERS OFFICE (QLD) INC.**

Level 9, 193 North Quay  
(corner Herschel St)  
Brisbane QLD 4000

Telephone: (07) 3211 4466  
Facsimile: (07) 3211 4655  
E-mail: [edoqld@edo.org.au](mailto:edoqld@edo.org.au)  
[www.edo.org.au/edoqld](http://www.edo.org.au/edoqld)  
ABN 14 911 812 589

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The proper officer  
Premier's Department  
By email to: [climatechange@premiers.qld.gov.au](mailto:climatechange@premiers.qld.gov.au)

Dear Sir/Madam,

### **Comments on ClimateSmart 2050 Queensland Climate Strategy**

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the recently released *ClimateSmart 2050 Queensland Climate Strategy* ("Strategy"). The Strategy contains several positive initiatives, however these are under-funded and will have minor impacts on greenhouse gas emissions compared with the continued huge financial support for the coal industry, the failure to properly invest in the renewable energy sector, and the failure to ensure all transport, mining and infrastructure projects are assessed for their climate change impacts.

#### EDO's experience on climate change

The Environmental Defenders Office Qld ("EDO Qld") is a public interest environmental and planning law community legal centre. Each year we provide legal assistance to hundreds of members of the community, both individuals and members of established groups, on environmental and planning issues, including climate change. EDO Qld is an active and independent leader in the fight against dangerous climate change. In the last 12 months, we have:

- run a test case on greenhouse gas emissions and coal mines against Xstrata Mine, which will shortly be heard by the Court of Appeal;
- drafted and advocated for changes to planning laws to reduce greenhouse gas emissions;
- run a successful seminar for industry with Qld Conservation entitled "The legal responsibility for greenhouse gas emissions for coal mined in Queensland";
- lodged a submission on the Queensland Government's Climate Smart Adaptation Paper; and
- spoken out as an independent public voice on the gap between government policy and necessary action.

#### Targets are too low and lack regulatory force

We acknowledge that the Queensland government and federal Labor have committed to a target while the federal Coalition government has not. However, on the scientific evidence presented by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) the target of 60% greenhouse gas

emissions reduction below 2000 levels by 2050 will result in a 2.4°C temperature increase. This will mean the death of the Great Barrier Reef, with frequent coral bleaching and widespread mortality predicted by the IPCC with a 1-3°C temperature rise.

The scientific consensus says we need a 60-90% target by 2050 based on 1990 levels, and targets for 2020, to hold temperature to a 2°C rise. Economists are saying that we need to make deep cuts in emissions *now* in order to ensure that we are economically better off in the long run.

The Strategy's current 2050 target is too weak and is compounded by the lack of a 2020 target which will not achieve protection for the Great Barrier Reef nor safeguard our long term economic position.

There is no indication in the Strategy about whether this target has any regulatory basis. Without it, the target becomes unenforceable and meaningless.

#### Ending Queensland's coal addiction and transitioning to renewables

The Premier states the obvious when he says "underpinning all of this [Strategy] is a strong commitment to the coal industry, which has 250 years worth of reserves, employs 13 500 Queenslanders and earns \$15 billion in exports for the State".

The Strategy purports to aim for all new coal power generation to be by 'clean coal' technology, but this is misleading as such technology is at least 15 years away from being proven to work or be commercially viable - despite the \$910 million (\$310 million of taxpayer funds) being invested in it at the expense of truly clean, renewable energies which get only \$50 million under the Strategy.

The Strategy allows new coal fired power stations to be built in Queensland if desired by foreign investors who would otherwise go elsewhere, and if alternative energy sources are not "economic". This is self-reinforcing as renewable energy sources will remain uneconomic while the coal industry is being heavily subsidised by the Queensland and federal governments.

The Strategy must be strengthened to enable it to properly deal with climate change, by:

- ensuring that the cost of investigating 'clean coal' is borne by the rich coal industry, while government funds are spent on renewable energies in Queensland;
- committing to phase out subsidies which promote the use of fossil fuels;
- placing a moratorium on issuing of licences for new coal-fired power stations; and
- immediately amending the *Environmental Protection Act 1994* to ensure that the full impacts of greenhouse gas emissions from existing coal mines are properly assessed and appropriate conditions about the avoidance, reduction or offsetting of emissions are imposed.

#### Ensuring climate change is mandatory part of decisions on development, infrastructure, transport and mining

The Strategy proposes a State Planning Policy (SPP) for climate change, which will require areas vulnerable to climate change to be identified in planning schemes and appropriate development controls are exercised in and adjacent to those areas.

This is a welcome first step towards comprehensive planning for climate change, but SPPs cannot guarantee achievement of the desired outcome, as Councils must only "have regard to" them when assessing development proposals. The *Integrated Planning Act* should be amended to require that

Councils are obliged to comply with the detail of the Climate Change SPP, not just “have regard to” it.

A further deficiency is that SPPs only apply to development which is approved under the *Integrated Planning Act*. Larger scale infrastructure, mining and transport infrastructure are not affected by SPPs.

The Strategy must be amended to ensure that all transport, mining and infrastructure projects are assessed for their climate change impacts and that demand management alternatives to new infrastructure are given equivalent consideration and assessment.

#### Renewable energy target too low and not a renewable-only target

The new 10% target for renewable energy is undermined by the fact that it is a joint renewable *and low emission* target, and is also too low at 6% by 2015 and 10% by 2030 and beyond. This is a missed opportunity to stimulate a thriving renewable energy sector which could provide sustainable, long-term economic gains for Queensland.

The Strategy should impose a renewable-only target of at least 25% by 2020, with graded interim targets before and after 2020.

#### Carbon trading scheme

The Strategy reiterates the Queensland Government’s commitment to work with the Federal Government and the other states and territories to develop a national emissions trading scheme by 2010.

In order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, such a trading scheme must have a substantial cap on emissions so permits are not just licences to pollute. It must cover all sectors of emitters and be compatible with emissions trading schemes already operating internationally. Initial grant of permits should be auctioned, not allocated for free – this flies in the face of the polluter pays principle and will create barriers to new market entrants.

#### Energy efficiency

While we support the \$55 million Smart Energy Savings Program to assist medium to large energy users undertake energy audits and implement energy savings measures (a requirement lacking in the federal *Energy Efficiency Opportunities Act 2006*), we do not agree that only measures which will ensure money is recouped within three years should be implemented. Implementing energy saving measures should be mandatory for medium and large energy users. For small energy users, energy audits should be required, with implementation required when expense will be recouped within five years. The Energy Saving Fund could be used to assist small energy users to achieve this.

We support the new requirements on new commercial buildings after 2010 being four-star energy efficiency rated, and all Queensland Government office buildings being carbon neutral by 2020. We also support the offsetting of emissions from the government vehicle fleet of 50% by 2010 and 100% by 2020, though vehicle use reduction should be the primary aim, with offsetting as a last resort.

#### Transport

The Strategy commits to expanding the public transport network and improving services including additional buses, extending the busway network, increasing the train fleet by 30% over four years,

improving regional public transport and expanding walking and cycle facilities including a regional cycle network before 2026.

These are mostly positive initiatives but require vastly more funding and must not be undercut by billions spent on new roads, tunnels, freeways and bypasses (except where such spending addresses urgent road safety issues). Buses should be placed on existing road space in dedicated bus lanes to avoid building energy-intensive busways and further discourage car use. The *Transport Infrastructure Act* must be amended to require all proposed transport infrastructure to be assessed for its climate change impacts and for demand management alternatives to be given equivalent consideration and assessment.

The motor vehicle transfer duty amendments announced as part of the 2007-2008 budget which provide a graduated rate scale based on number of cylinders should be re-considered on the basis of fuel efficiency rather than cylinders. We support offering those annually registering a car the option of offsetting their car use by planting trees, but drivers should be educated on how they can reduce their car use as a primary strategy.

#### Energy conservation in homes

The Strategy proposes some good measures, such as feed-in tariffs for solar energy fed back into the grid, but they do not go far enough and are allocated insufficient funds.

‘Smart’ meters should be introduced, which measure electricity use and regulate it by demand and time of day. New tariff arrangements to encourage energy conservation and allocate costs more fairly should be mandated.

\$7.25 million for rebates for installing climate friendly products in homes in remote areas, and \$4 million for converting electric hot water to gas or solar systems after 2010, is a fraction of what is required for rebates to be available to all homes in Queensland to install climate friendly and energy saving devices, preferably solar.

For new homes, the Queensland Development Code should be amended to require design for maximum energy efficiency and passive solar, and include mandatory solar panels using either photovoltaics or the more efficient and cheaper silver cell technology.

Queensland needs to get serious about renewable energy if we are to have any hope of saving the Great Barrier Reef and protecting our populated coastal areas from dangerous weather events. The money proposed to prop up the coal industry should be diverted into these large scale rebate programs to ensure every house is its own clean power station.

I would be pleased to discuss any of the proposals in this submission with you further, so please do not hesitate to contact me on 3211 4466.

*(Signed)*

**Jo-Anne Bragg**  
Principal Solicitor  
Environmental Defenders Office (Qld) Inc