



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA



JASON WOOD MP
Member for La Trobe

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Consideration in Detail

Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme Bill 2009

Mr WOOD (La Trobe) (10.43am)— In 2006, I was fortunate enough to visit the Australian Antarctic Territory as a representative of the government. I was mesmerised by the tranquil beauty of Antarctica. Majestic icebergs rose out of the water. Seals lazed about on icy shelves and penguins waddled past, seemingly unfazed by scientists snapping pictures. Antarctica is one of the few places on this earth that has not been spoilt by humans. Sadly, on the other side of the globe, polar bears in the North Pole are in grave danger. Unlike Antarctica, the North Pole has no landmass; it is only ice. Polar bears hunt for food from Arctic ice shelves, hunting seals from ice platforms and fishing through holes in the ice. Global warming has caused these ice sheets to melt significantly. Experts say that within 100 years the polar bear will be extinct. Closer to home, there is a real threat to the Great Barrier Reef unless something is done urgently.

I have been a passionate advocate for the environment since my days in Ferny Creek Scouts and into year 12, where I completed a full-time education course on the outdoors and environment, and then into my first job, where I taught rock climbing, canoeing and cross-country skiing and in which job I later became an instructor. I have actually been a member of Greenpeace longer than I have been a member of the Liberal Party. My passion has not been diminished by my election to this parliament; rather, it has been nurtured and enhanced. In actual fact, at the last election I proposed a \$3 million program for weed eradication in the Dandenong Ranges. Sadly, the Labor government walked away from this. I have previously spoken in this House against the logging of old growth forests in Tasmania and also about my utter disgust at the annual Japanese whaling hunt.

I am a strong supporter of an emissions trading scheme. I am of the strong view that, as members of parliament, we must stand up for what we believe in and aim for the highest targets as a benchmark rather than starting from a low base. I have the personal view that, when it comes to an ETS, we should aim for a 25 per cent reduction by 2020 as an absolute minimum.

I know many people do not believe in climate change. I ask those people: what if you are wrong? Do we really want to gamble with our children's future? Do we want to condemn our most vulnerable creatures to death simply because some people did not think there was a problem? We could be the gatekeepers of one of the most important times in our planet's history. Without action, we could see the demise of the polar bear and, locally, the death of the Great Barrier Reef.

The Prime Minister during the 2007 election campaign promised to deliver an emissions trading scheme by 2010. Obviously this is a broken promise. He also promised to have strong targets—another broken promise. After the election, the Rudd government rolled out its ETS scheme, which would cut emissions by five to 15 per cent. The scheme was ridiculed by business groups and green groups alike. It was only after a public outcry that the Prime Minister pledged to increase the reduction targets—but only if the whole world agreed to do the same. The government's emissions trading scheme is a shocker and is no good for the environment. If this government wants to show that it is serious about reducing carbon emissions it should cooperate with other nations at the Copenhagen conference and aim for strong international targets.

I recently met with my former teacher from my outdoor education and environmental course, Peter Cook, now President of the Dandenong Ranges Renewable Energy Association, and with Ms Jo Tenner of the Upper Yarra and Dandenongs Environment Council. The local green groups in my election of La Trobe are very critical of and cynical about this scheme. They see it for what it is—a token gesture that will do nothing for the environment. They want me to vote against this flawed scheme, and I will.